



Photo courtesy of Los Angeles Catholic Worker



Jim Spickard, PhD

Professor of Sociology

Class Meetings:

M/W 1-2:20 pm

Larsen Hall 230

Office Hours:

Mon / Wed 3-5 pm

& by appointment

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Online Course

Syllabus

& Website at:

http://SOAN324.

coolsociology.net

SOAN 324: Hunger & Homelessness in America

A course about the bottom end of America's class system.

This course is designed to deepen our understanding of hunger and homelessness in the United States, mainly as a consequence of severe poverty. Through classroom study and field experiences, we will explore the social, economic, and political causes of these problems. I have organized the course around five core questions:

1. What is life like for the hungry, the homeless, and the near-homeless in the U.S?
2. How many homeless and near-homeless are there?
3. What are the major and minor causes of homelessness and hunger?
4. What are individuals, small organizations, and governments doing to help? What can they do to help?

5. What does it take to solve these problems? What can governments, organizations, and private citizens contribute?

The course combines in-class and out-of-class work in unusual ways. We will begin with an in-class overview, led both by the course leader and by student presentation teams. We will then shift our learning to out-of-class activities of two types. Working as research teams, we will seek answers to the core questions, using class time to process our out-of-class results. Working individually, each student will volunteer time with a local agency aiding the hungry and homeless. At the end of the semester, we will develop projects that draw on our experiences to teach others what we have learned.

Course Elements

- Interactive, group-oriented classroom work (andragogy)
- Group book presentations
- Team-based data exercises
- Internships with local social service agencies (w/ CSAC credit)
- Personal Learning Contract
- Public course blog
- Each-One-Teach-One project
- Group-constructed Take-Home Final exam
- Final Reflection Paper

“Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.” – Robert Frost

Books Everyone Reads

- Barbara Ehrenreich: Nickel and Dimed: on Not Getting By In America, 10th Anniversary Edition (2011)
- Vincent Lyon-Callo: Inequality, Poverty, And Neoliberal Governance: Activist Ethnography in the Homeless Sheltering Industry (2004)
- Toni Flynn: Finding My Way (1989/2016)

Reading Done in Groups

read one from “A”, one from “B”

(assigned in class)

“A”

- Lee Stringer: Grand Central Winter (1999)
- Deborah Connolly: Homeless Mothers: Face to Face with Women and Poverty (2002)
- Elliot Liebow: Tell Them Who I Am: Lives of Homeless Women (1995)
- Mitchell Dunier: Sidewalk (2000)
- Forest Stuart: Down, Out, and Under Arrest: Policing and Everyday Life in Skid Row (2016)
- Jason Wasserman & Jeffrey Clair: At Home on the Street (2009)

“B”

- Kim Hopper: Reckoning With Homelessness (2003)
- Kenneth Kusmer: Down and Out, on the Road: The Homeless in American History (2002)
- Matthew Desmond: Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City (2016)
- Deborah Padgett et al: Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems, and Changing Lives. (2016)
- Sasha Abramsky: The American Way of Poverty (2013)
- Andrew Heben: Tent City Urbanism: From Self-Organized Camps to Tiny House Villages. (2014)

Assignment Categories

- Course Leadership: (20% of grade). Includes: Group Data Exercises & Helping Others Learn
- Weekly Blog Posts (5% of grade).
- Personal Learning Contract, Midterm Reflection, and Final Reflection (15%)
- Internship & reports (15%)
- 2 Group Book Presentations (15%)
- Teaching Project (15%)
- Take-Home Final (15%)
 - Questions will be constructed together in class

Evaluation

- Each assignment is marked *excellent, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, or unacceptable*
- Each major assignment will also receive written comments
- Assignments in each of the above categories will be combined into an overall category evaluation.
- The evaluations will then be summed and translated into the University’s grading system, using the standards at the top of the next page.

See course website for:

- Detailed course overview
- Reading list & schedule
- Session topics, due dates
- Assignment descriptions
- Special rubrics and guides
- Rules & procedures
- Grading policies

<http://SOAN324>.

coolsociology.net



Grading Standards

- A. (4.0) You did everything I could possibly ask of you, and you did it extremely well. You worked very hard, learned a great deal, and showed conspicuous intelligence. The quality of your work was outstanding.
- B. (3.0) You did all the work, and you did it well. You worked hard and learned a good deal. The quality of your work was good.
- C. (2.0) You did all or almost all the work. It is clear that you learned a number of things, though those things may not hang together in a systematic and critical understanding of the course material. The quality of your work was adequate.
- D. (1.0) You did most of the work. You may have learned some things, but it is not clear that you learned anything important. The quality of your work was less than adequate.
- F. (0.0) You did not complete the course requirements at the level expected of college students in this subject area.

(Grades of x.3 and x.7 demonstrate levels of work between these major standards.)



Week

Topic

Jan 14

Homelessness and Social Inequality

Jan 21

Poverty in America

Jan 28

What Is It Like to Be Homeless?

Feb 4

What is it Like to be Homeless? *(Continued)*

Feb 11

What is it Like to be Homeless? *(Continued)*

Feb 18

How Many Homeless Are There?

Feb 25

What Causes Homelessness?

Spring Break

Mar 11

Is the Problem Homelessness? Or Lack of Housing?

Mar 18

What Are Organizations Doing To Help?

Mar 25

What Are Organizations Doing To Help? *(Continued)*

Apr 1

What Works?

Apr 8

What Works? *(Continued)*

Apr 15

Teaching Others, Teaching Ourselves

Finals Week



The Fine Print

Regarding plagiarism: The short version is: **Do your own work.** You may borrow ideas from others, so long as you cite them properly and then extend or evaluate their analysis. You cannot clip and past text from the Internet into your papers and pass it off as your own. You cannot turn in a paper that someone else has written. Plagiarized work or exam cheating will automatically get a zero on the assignment and may cause you to fail the class. The University has an Academic Honesty Policy, which you can find in the latest **University Catalog**.

Technology Use in Class: Research has demonstrated convincingly that students who try to take notes electronically learn much less than do those who take notes by hand. Therefore, unless you have a documented accommodation, **do not use laptops, tablets, phones, etc. for note-taking.** *Bring a paper notebook, have it on the desk in front of you, and use it. I recommend the Cornell system of note-taking.* (Google it.)

You may bring your other equipment, but leave it in your book bag under the table. *Exception: a tablet, if you purchased an electronic textbook.* Unless you are a parent who needs to be available in emergencies, turn off your cell phones before you enter the classroom.

Turning in assignments: Different assignments get turned in in different ways. You will bring some of them to class, others you will turn in on Moodle, and still others you will post to the Course Blog. Please consult the Course Schedule at the website for details.

Printer or computer problems are never an excuse for not having work submitted on time.

See the complete list of expectations on the course website.

Help & Resources

If you are feeling lost or overwhelmed...

1. Make an appointment with me

You are welcome to email me, or make an appointment to meet, ideally during my office hours. Many questions and issues can be easily resolved this way.

2. Use online resources

On the website, I've posted a series of guides to our assignments, links to useful information, and information about books you can read. Check it out!

3. Get to know the Reference Desk

Our library staff is eager to help guide your research and to orient you to our library's paper and online resources.

4. Use the Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free resource at any stage of the writing process, from getting started to revising drafts to polishing a final essay. You can make an appointment online at <https://redlands.mywconline.com/>

5. Visit the Academic Success Center

In some cases, students benefit from tutoring or one-on-one intervention. The Academic Success Center offers (free) tutoring in many subjects, and can also help you with general study, note-taking, or textbook reading strategies. They are located in Student Development Center the lower floor of the Armacost Library.

Accommodations

If you have a learning (or other) issue, and you need a reasonable accommodation so you can learn effectively, please talk to me at the beginning of the semester. In almost every case, we can design something that will work.

This includes if your financial situation make it difficult for you to afford books, food, or anything else. Please speak to me if you are comfortable doing so.

I also make accommodations for parents of small children. See me.