The University of Oklahoma  
College of Continuing Education  
Advanced Programs – Course Syllabus

Course Title:  
Special Topics: Poverty, Income Inequality, and Public Policy

Course Number:  
Econ 5990-104

Course Description:  
The United States is an extremely affluent nation, yet there are pockets of persistent poverty and unemployment. High levels of poverty and income inequality have serious economic, social, psychological, and political implications. This course will analyze poverty using economic and sociological perspectives. Topics will include the measurement of poverty, empirical trends in poverty and income inequality, the relationship between human capital attainment and poverty, and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programs. Related issues such as child poverty, racial segregation, access to health care, and discrimination will be addressed.

Class Dates, Location and Hours:  
Location: OCCE, Norman, OK. Classes are held at the Thurman White Forum Building of OCCE, 1704 Asp Ave.  
Hours: Fri 5:30-9:30 p.m.; Sat 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sun 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
Last day to enroll or drop without penalty: March 15, 2012

Site Director:  
Cathy Yeaman. Assistant: Jan Plavchak. Phone: 405-325-3333; Fax: 405-325-9148; email: apnorman@ou.edu

Professor Contact Information:  
Course Professor: Dr. Aparna Mitra  
Mailing Address: 320 Hester Hall, 729 Elm Avenue, Norman, OK 73019  
Telephone Number: 405-325-5859  
Fax Number: 405-325-5842  
E-mailAddress: amitra@ou.edu  
Professor availability: The professor will be available via e-mail to students before and after the class sessions. On-site office hours are half an hour before and after each class session, by appointment.

Textbook(s) and Instructional Materials:  
Student materials are available at the Follett/AP Bookstore located in the Oklahoma Memorial Union, 900 Asp Ave., Norman, OK. Orders can be placed online at www.oklahomaunion.bkstr.com or by telephone at 866-369-9713 (toll free in the U.S.) or 405-325-5960 (outside the U.S.). E-mail orders may be sent to oklahomaunion@bkstr.com. Representatives are available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. CST Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CST on Friday. Summer hours: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. CST. Faxed orders may be placed 24 hours a day to 866-223-5607 (toll free in the U.S.) or 405-325-1557 (outside the U.S.).


Note: The Follett/AP Bookstore is the Advanced Programs contractual textbook provider. Should text changes become necessary after publication of the course syllabus, Advanced Programs will facilitate text returns/refunds only for texts purchased through the Follett/AP Bookstore.

Course Objectives:

At the end of the course, students are expected to have a thorough understanding of the multidimensional nature of poverty and the complexity of formulating appropriate policies geared towards the reduction of poverty. The course is not technical but requires extensive reading and writing, therefore it is imperative that you do your readings prior to class. Major emphasis will be placed on discussions, research, and classroom debates. Please consult the following websites frequently to contribute to meaningful discussions in class.

- [http://www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
- [http://www.childstats.gov](http://www.childstats.gov)
- [http://npc.umich.edu/about_us/](http://npc.umich.edu/about_us/), National Poverty Center, University of Michigan

Course Outline:

Session I
- Introduction to the Course
- Current statistics on Poverty
- Definition and Measurement of Poverty – Iceland, chapters 1, 3
- Early History of Poverty – Iceland, chapter 2

Session II
- Causes of Poverty – Iceland, chapter 5
- Demographics of the Poor – Iceland, chapter 4
- Child Poverty in America – lecture and research from childstats.com

Session III
- Human Capital and Poverty – lecture
- Kozol, chapters 1-6
- The Secondary Labor Market – lecture
- Ehrenreich, Introduction, chapters 1, 2, 3, Evaluation

Session IV
- Race and Poverty – lecture
- Racial segregation in America – Massey and Denton, chapters 1-7
- The Feminization of Poverty – lecture

Session V
- Review of Sessions 1-IV
- Welfare and Poverty – lecture
- Public Policy

Session VI
- Review and Final Examination
Assignments, Grading and Due Dates:

1. Final Examination – 60% - last day of class
2. Class Discussion, Research, and Participation – 10% (This implies discussions BASED on readings and research)
3. Post-seminar assignment – 30% due two weeks after last day of class

The post seminar assignment involves writing a structured term paper (15 or > pages) on any issues related to poverty in the U.S. or across the world. The paper should be divided into different sections such as, Introduction, Background, Analysis, and Conclusion along with a bibliography. Details will be discussed in class.

Grading: This is a letter-graded course: A, B, C, D, or F.

NOTICE: Failure to meet assignment due dates could result in a grade of I (Incomplete) and may adversely impact Tuition Assistance and/or Financial Aid.
POLICIES AND NOTICES

Attendance/Grade Policy

Attendance and participation in interaction, individual assignments, group exercises, simulations, role playing, etc. are valuable aspects of any course because much of the learning comes from discussions in class with other students. It is expected that you attend all classes and be on time except for excused emergencies.

Excused absences are given for professor mandated activities or legally required activities such as emergencies or military assignments. Unavoidable personal emergencies, including (but not limited to) serious illness; delays in getting to class because of accidents, etc.; deaths and funerals, and hazardous road conditions will be excused.

If you are obtaining financial assistance (TA, STAP, FA, VA, Scholarship, etc.) to pay all or part of your tuition cost, you must follow your funding agency/institution’s policy regarding “I” (Incomplete) grades unless the timeline is longer than what the University policy allows then you must adhere to the University policy.

Students who receive Financial Aid must resolve/complete any “I” (Incomplete) grades by the end of the term or he/she may be placed on “financial aid probation.” If the “I” grade is not resolved/completed by the end of the following term, the student’s Financial Aid may be suspended make the student ineligible for further Financial Aid.

Students are responsible for meeting the guidelines of Tuition Assistance and Veterans Assistance. See the education counselor at your local education center for a complete description of your TA or VA requirements.

Academic Honesty

Honesty is a fundamental precept in all academic activities and … [you] have a special obligation to observe the highest standards of honesty. Academic misconduct in any form is inimical to the purposes and functions of the University and is therefore unacceptable and is rigorously proscribed. Academic misconduct includes:

- cheating (using unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise), plagiarism, falsification of records, unauthorized possession of examinations, intimidation, and any and all other actions that may improperly affect the evaluation of a student’s academic performance or achievement; assisting others in any such act; or attempting to engage in such acts.

All acts of academic misconduct will be reported and adjudicated as prescribed by the student code of the University of Oklahoma. All students should review the “Student’s Guide to Academic Integrity” found at http://www.ou.edu/provost/integrity

Accommodation Statement

The College of Continuing Education [Advanced Programs] is committed to making its activities as accessible as possible. For accommodations on the basis of disability, please contact your OU Site Director.

Course Policies

Advanced Programs policy is to order books in paperback if available. Courses, dates, and professors are subject to change. Please check with your OU Site Director. Students should retain a copy of any assignments that are mailed to the professor for the course.

Copyright

Any and all course materials, syllabus, lessons, lectures, etc. are the property of professor teaching the course and the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma and are protected under applicable copyright.

For more information about Advanced Programs, visit our website at: http://www.goou.ou.edu/
INSTRUCTOR VITA

Aparna Mitra, Ph.D.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Political Economy, University of Texas at Dallas

CURRENT POSITIONS

- Associate Professor of Economics, Department of Economics, University of Oklahoma
- Director, Advanced Program in Economics, Department of Economics, University of Oklahoma

FREQUENTLY TAUGHT ADVANCED PROGRAMS COURSES

- Labor Economics
- Discrimination in Labor Markets
- Managerial I
- Poverty
- Income Inequality
- Public Policy

MAJOR AREAS OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH INTEREST

- Labor Economics
- Economics of Race and Gender
- Gender and Labor Markets in Developing Countries
- Economics of Aging
- Economic Development in India

REPRESENTATIVE PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS


CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- “Gender Violence and Women’s Mental Health in India,” 13th World Congress for Social Economics, Montreal, Canada, June 2010
- “Gender Inequality and the Spread of HIV/AIDS in India,” Southwestern Economics Association, Houston, April 2010
REPRESENTATIVE HONORS AND AWARDS RECEIVED

- Outstanding Undergraduate Professor, Department of Economics, 2011
- Most Inspiring Economics Faculty, OU Student Athletes, 2011
- Presidential “Dream Course”, University of Oklahoma, 2009
- Presidential Distinguished Faculty Mentor, University of Oklahoma, fall, 2008, 2009

MAJOR PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Association for Social Economics, Society for the Advancement of Behavioral Economics, International Society for Feminist Economics, Southwestern Social Science Association
- Southwest Regional Director, Association for Social Economics, 2010-
- President, Southwestern Economics Association, 2004-2005