

**Virginia Military Institute**

**HNL 383W 01**

**Poverty and Human Capability**

**Spring 2012**

Instructors: COL Atin Basu and Dr Duncan Richter

Location: Scott Shipp Hall 347

Time: MWF 1000-1050

*Poverty and Human Capability* examines the causes and consequences of poverty in order to come up with workable solutions for eradicating it. To this end we will explore: (a) definitions of poverty, (b) various measures of poverty, (c) causes of poverty, and (d) possible solutions and ways to choose between solutions. Enrollment is restricted to cadets in the Institute Honors Program or those who receive permission from director of the Institute Honors Program. Provisions will be to enroll non-honors cadets who have declared their intention to become involved with VMI's Shepherd Poverty Program.

**Readings:**

Martha Nussbaum *Creating Capabilities*, Belknap Harvard, 2011

Amartya Sen *Development as Freedom*, Anchor Books, 2000

Robert Solomon and Mark Murphy (eds) *What is Justice?*, Oxford University Press, 2000 (WiJ)

Other readings will be provided in class

**Grades** will be based on two short papers, one long paper, and class participation, including two short in-class presentations.

Breakdown of final grade:

Each short paper is worth 20% (= 40 % total)

The long paper is worth 40%

Class participation (including two short, in class presentations) counts for 20%

**Students with Disabilities**

VMI abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which mandate reasonable accommodations be provided for cadets with documented disabilities. If you have a registered disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate provision of the accommodations you may need. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disabilities Services, the designated office on campus to provide services for cadets with disabilities. The office is located in room 215-A of Carroll Hall; you may call 540-464-7765 or stop by the office for more information.

## PAPERS

The first paper should be 1250-2000 words long. A presentation based on part or all of the paper, possibly involving PowerPoint or video, will be given by each student in class on Friday 3 February. The first draft of the full paper is due on Monday 6 February in class for peer review. The second draft is due in class on Wednesday 8 February. The final draft is due no later than CAD on the last day of classes. The topic for this paper is as follows:

1. What is the best definition of 'poverty'? This first essay is definitional and philosophical. Some people define poverty in absolute terms and in terms of a dollar amount. Other people define it in relative terms, so that poverty in the US would not mean the same thing as poverty in the Sudan, say. Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, and others define it in terms of capabilities because, for instance, all the money in the world won't help you get an education if you are a woman in a country that does not allow women to go to school. So the first assignment requires students to be familiar with different definitions of poverty (the ones I've mentioned here are not the only ones) and to assess the pros and cons of using each. Then they have to take a stand on which is best.

The second paper should also be 1250-2000 words long. The first draft is due in class on March 2. The second draft is due in class on March 21. The final draft is due no later than CAD on the last day of classes. The topic for this paper is as follows:

2. What causes poverty? This essay should focus on the how social, political, and cultural institutions affect poverty. The essay should connect the economics of growth and the game theoretic tools we learn in class to the issue of poverty. Focus particularly on the notion of poverty as a lack of choice.

The third paper should be 2500-4000 words long. The first draft is due in class on March 23. The second draft is due on April 12. The final draft is due no later than CAD on the last day of classes. The topic for this paper is as follows:

3. What is one thing that should be done to alleviate poverty? This third essay asks students to identify a possible solution to some poverty-related problem. They might argue for the implementation of some particular policy or the enactment of some law. Perhaps they could argue for one global solution to poverty in general, but they wouldn't have to. For this they would have to draw on the first two essays in order to have a clear idea of what they mean by 'poverty' and what its worst effects are. They would draw on the second half of the course to know what kinds of policies, laws, etc. would be likely to have what effects. But they would also draw on the first half of the course to think about what the ethical thing to do might be. Whose obligation is it to do something about poverty? What does justice require? What does it allow?

So this big essay synthesizes knowledge from the whole course, but should spend little time repeating the work done in the first two assignments.

Cadets are encouraged to make use of the Writing Center and to visit the course instructors during their office hours for additional assistance with these assignments.

## Syllabus

### *Part One: Poverty in America*

Friday January 13	Introduction to the course
Monday January 16	Heritage Foundation, etc. Read this: <a href="http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/07/what-is-poverty">http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/07/what-is-poverty</a>
Wednesday January 18	Historical views of poverty. Read John Iceland "Early Views of Poverty in America" (provided)
Friday January 20	Standards used today. Read <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/14/us/14census.html?_r=2&amp;pagewanted=all">http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/14/us/14census.html?_r=2&amp;pagewanted=all</a> , <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/04/us/experts-say-bleak-account-of-poverty-missed-the-mark.html?_r=1">http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/04/us/experts-say-bleak-account-of-poverty-missed-the-mark.html?_r=1</a> , <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/08/us/poverty-gets-new-measure-at-census-bureau.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/08/us/poverty-gets-new-measure-at-census-bureau.html</a> , and <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/19/us/census-measures-those-not-quite-in-poverty-but-struggling.html?pagewanted=all">http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/19/us/census-measures-those-not-quite-in-poverty-but-struggling.html?pagewanted=all</a>
Monday January 23	Nussbaum, chapters 1 and 2
Wednesday January 25	Nussbaum, chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 77-100 are optional)
Friday January 27	Nussbaum, chapters 5 and 6
Monday January 30	Nussbaum, chapters 7 and 8
Wednesday February 01	Nussbaum, conclusion
Friday February 03	Cadet presentations on the best definition of 'poverty'
Monday February 06	Peer response to first drafts of papers on meaning of poverty

### *Part Two: Causes of Poverty*

The Economics of Choice  
The Economics of Growth  
Readings: Chapters 1 through 4 in Development as Freedom  
The Economics of Society  
Readings: Chapters 5,6,7 in Development as Freedom  
Measuring poverty and inequality.

Wednesday Feb 08	First paper due in class
F Feb 10 – W Feb 29	TBD

### *Part Three: Poverty and Justice*

F Mar 02	Homer and the Bible in Solomon and Murphy (pp. 13-20 in WiJ)
M Mar 05	Rousseau in WiJ, pp. 81-94
W Mar 07	Locke and Hume in WiJ, pp. 133-142
F Mar 09	Smith in WiJ, pp. 143-151

Spring Furlough

M Mar 19 Mill in WiJ, pp. 166-174

W Mar 21 Engels and Marx in WiJ, pp. 174-180

F Mar 23 Hayek in WiJ, pp. 180-187

M Mar 26 Rawls in WiJ, pp. 100-106 and pp. 281-287

W Mar 28 Nozick in WiJ, pp. 106-113 and pp. 301-308

Spring FTX

T Apr 03 MacIntyre in WiJ, pp. 309-314

#### *Part Four: Solutions*

Chapters 5 through 12 in Development as Freedom and other readings supplied by instructor.

W Apr 04 – M Apr 30 TBD

W May 02 Review

### **WORK FOR GRADE POLICY**

Development of the spirit as well as the skills of academic inquiry is central to the mission of VMI's Academic Program. As a community of scholars, posing questions and seeking answers, we invariably consult and build upon the ideas, discoveries, and products of others who have wrestled with related issues and problems before us. We are obligated ethically and in many instances legally to acknowledge the sources of all borrowed material that we use in our own work. This is the case whether we find that material in conventional resources, such as the library or cyberspace, or discover it in other places like conversations with our peers.

Academic integrity requires the full and proper documentation of any material that is not original with us. It is therefore a matter of honor. To misrepresent someone else's words, ideas, images, data, or other intellectual property as one's own is stealing, lying, and cheating all at once.

Because the offense of improper or incomplete documentation is so serious, and the consequences so potentially grave, the following policies regarding work for grade have been adopted as a guide to cadets and faculty in upholding the Honor Code under which all VMI cadets live:

#### **1) Cadets' responsibilities**

**"Work for grade"** is defined as any work presented to an instructor for a formal grade or undertaken in satisfaction of a requirement for successful completion of a course or degree requirement. All work submitted for grade is considered the cadet's own work. **"Cadet's own work"** means that he or she has composed the work from his or her general accumulation of knowledge and skill except as clearly and fully documented and that it has been composed especially for the current assignment. No work previously submitted in any course at VMI or elsewhere will be resubmitted or reformatted for submission in a current course without the specific approval of the instructor.

In all work for grade, failure to distinguish between the cadet's own work and ideas and the work and ideas of others is known as **plagiarism**. Proper documentation clearly and fully identifies the sources of all borrowed ideas, quotations, or other assistance. The cadet is referred to the VMI-authorized handbook for rules concerning quotations, paraphrases, and documentation.

In all written work for grade, the cadet must include the words "**HELP RECEIVED**" conspicuously on the document, and he or she must then do one of two things: (1) state "none," meaning that no help was received except as documented in the work; or (2) explain in detail the nature of the help received. In oral work for grade, the cadet must make the same declaration before beginning the presentation. Admission of help received may result in a lower grade but will not result in prosecution for an honor violation.

Cadets are prohibited from discussing the contents of a quiz/exam until it is returned to them or final course grades are posted. This enjoinder does not imply that any inadvertent expression or behavior that might indicate one's feeling about the test should be considered a breach of honor. The real issue is whether cadets received information, not available to everyone else in the class, which would give them an unfair advantage. If a cadet inadvertently gives or receives information, the incident must be reported to the professor and the Honor Court.

Each cadet bears the responsibility for familiarizing himself or herself thoroughly with the policies stated in this section, with any supplementary statement regarding work for grade expressed by the academic department in which he or she is taking a course, and with any special conditions provided in writing by the professor for a given assignment. If there is any doubt or uncertainty about the correct interpretation of a policy, the cadet should consult the instructor of the course. There should be no confusion, however, on the basic principle that it is never acceptable to submit someone else's work, written or otherwise, formally graded or not, as one's own.

The violation by a cadet of any of these policies will, if he or she is found guilty by the Honor Court, result in his or her being dismissed from VMI. Neither ignorance nor professed confusion about the correct interpretation of these policies is an excuse.

#### **Departmental Statement Concerning VMI's Policies Regarding Work For Grade**

At the discretion of individual instructors, students may take advantage of various forms of help when completing work for grade, and may periodically be involved in collaborative projects and research. The following policy delineates how such help and collaboration can be used in accordance with VMI's Honor Code.

## Cadets' Responsibilities

1. Use of tutoring assistance from Athletic Advising, the Academic Center, the Writing Center, fellow students, and private professional tutors:

Studying course material: cadets may receive help from tutors to assist in studying material for tests.

- Papers, projects and presentations: cadets may receive help in the form of critical comments as defined by the institute "Work for Grade Policy." Cadets are, in fact, encouraged to use the Writing Center for help with psychology and philosophy papers. The nature of any such help received must be explained on the cover page of a paper or project and in either oral or written form when making a presentation.

2. Collaboration:

- Collaboration is often appropriate for research and discussion. When working as a group, cadets must follow exactly the instructor's guidelines for the project. When presenting the results of their work, the group must report in detail any tutor assistance received by any member of the group.
- Discussion among peers and tutors is often an important component of learning and thinking. However, a cadet must be careful to attribute any specific ideas or words that are not his or hers to their source. Cadets must follow the VMI-authorized handbook for citation rules concerning quotations, paraphrase and documentation as specified in the Institute "Work for Grade Policy."

3. Use of computer aids and calculators:

- All cadets may use statistical programs and calculators for research.
- All cadets may use spelling, style and grammar checkers freely and do not need to list their use under help received.

In this course you **may use tutoring** and **tutors and peers may offer cadets critical comments** on their papers. Offering **critical comments** means giving general advice on such matters as organization, thesis development, support for assertions, and patterns of errors. It does not include proofreading or editing.

**Proofreading** means correcting errors (e.g., in spelling, grammar, punctuation). It is the last step taken by the writer in the **editing** process. In addition to the corrections made in proofreading, **editing** includes making such changes as the addition, deletion, or reordering of paragraphs, sentences, phrases, or words. **A cadet may not have his or her work proofread or edited by someone other than the instructor.**