

University of Haifa
Department of Sociology

Poverty and Inequality

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Office Hours: By appointment

Class Information:
Day:
Time:

Course Description

Poverty and inequality are increasing. In this class we will apply a comparative approach that highlights country differences. Reading materials include general theories as well as research published in scholarly journals.

In the first few weeks of this class we will review basic theories of poverty and inequality and we will discuss how theories regarding poverty have changed over the years. We will also learn about various ways of measuring poverty, material hardship, and inequality, and we will review the methods and data used.

In the remaining weeks of the class we will turn to substantive topics such as gender, immigration, ethnicity/nationality, age, and health. Within each topic we will survey the debates within contemporary scholarship and we will compare Israel and other countries. Students will also analyze international data and conduct country comparisons. Examination of these issues will introduce students to some of the challenges that policymakers face today.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, students will:

- Be able to interpret measures of poverty and inequality and compare them over time and between countries.
- Be able to gather reliable data from the internet and from published sources.
- Be able to produce graphs and tables from published data.
- Be able to analyze graphs and tables and synthesize the information into a short summary.
- Be able to identify trends in published data.
- Be able to synthesize research findings and write a literature review.
- Be able to articulate an evidence based argument.

Work

All work for this class should be typed, double-spaced, left justified, printed 12-point font of your choice. Follow the Chicago Manual of Style and consult the instructor if you have questions. All work should be submitted both in hard copy in class the day the paper is due and by Moodle. The word limit, as specified in each assignment is a necessary requirement that trains you to express your ideas in a concise form. Assignments may be submitted in English or in Hebrew. Assignments may be submitted alone or in pairs. Permission will not be granted to submissions of more than two students. If working in pairs, both students submitting are responsible for the work submitted.

Late policy

Late work will be accepted, but will lose 5 points for each day it is late. If you have extenuating circumstances please contact me before due date and I will try to accommodate your needs.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all scheduled course meetings and to be present promptly at the start of instruction, unless prevented from doing so by illness or another compelling cause. Students who miss a class or any course requirement must notify their course professor and make arrangements to complete any missed work.

Office Hours

Please email me if you would like to schedule a time to meet before or after class.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on a learning disability must initiate the request with the office of the Dean of Students 04 -8249265 LDA@univ.haifa.ac.il For additional questions on learning disabilities please contact mhait@univ.haifa.ac.il 04-8249022. Students should contact the Office of the Dean of Students as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The Office of the Dean of Students is located in the Student Building, 3rd floor. Students who need accommodation in class and already have a letter from the university are invited to notify me by email [in the beginning of the semester.](mailto:mhait@univ.haifa.ac.il)

Computer use in class

In order to limit distractions in class, there is no computer use in class, except by special permission from the instructor, or when required to complete data assignments.

Ethics

All students will be expected to comply with the University's ethics Code. The code is available on the department's website. It is a violation of ethics to submit work you did not do.

Required Readings

Weekly readings are listed within the syllabus. All articles are available through Moodle and the University of Haifa library. The instructor may make changes in course readings and topics.

Course Topics, by Week

Week 1 Introduction

What is poverty?

Week 2 Measurement

How are poverty and hardship measured?

Week 3 History & Theory

How has poverty changed over time? Can we explain country differences?

Week 4 ISSP Data

What can we learn about country differences using survey data?

Week 5 Policy

Does policy aimed at alleviating poverty work?

Week 6 Gender

Why are there gender differences in poverty?

Week 7 Working and poor

Who are the working poor?

Week 8 Poverty and hardship over the life course

How do poverty and hardship change over the life course?

Week 9 Family and poverty

How do family transitions and childhood circumstances affect poverty and hardship?

Week 10 Poverty, affluence, and inequality

Why do we know more about poverty than about affluence?

Week 11 Poverty and health – the case of COVID-19

How did COVID-19 affect people in poverty?

Week 12 Immigration

How does immigration affect earnings and poverty?

Week 13 Review

What will the final exam look like?

Good luck!

Course Requirements

Weekly meetings are based on lectures, class discussions and class activities. Students are expected to complete the weekly assigned readings, to attend lectures, to participate in class discussions and activities, and to submit all course assignments on time.

Course Assignments

- 1) Three short assignments, to be presented throughout the semester, in the order of your choice, on three **different** items from the syllabus, in **different weeks**. Pass/fail, no grade, total of 10 points. See appendix for details.
- 2) Two oral assignments. Students will:
 - a) Present three discussion questions for the class on the readings and will engage the class discussion. Dates will be coordinated with the instructor.
 - b) or Analyze ISSP 2019 data – choose two countries and compare poverty indicators or attitudes (such as: Skipping a meal, who should take care of the poor, the structure of inequality in society.)
<https://www.gesis.org/en/issp/modules/issp-modules-by-topic/social-inequality/2019>
- 3) Final exam. The final exam will cover the topics and readings in this syllabus.

Grading

Exercise	Week due		points
Assignment 1	Week 3		3.3
Assignment 2	Week 5		3.3
Assignment 3	Week 7		3.3
Oral assignment 1	To be determined		20
Oral assignment 2	To be determined		20
Final exam	To be determined		50

- The instructor may update the syllabus as needed.

Detailed Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction

a. What is poverty? What are the class requirements? Who is the instructor? Who are the fellow students?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Know fellow students' names
- Be familiar with syllabus & course requirements
- Be able to distinguish poverty from inequality.
- Articulate the main changes that have occurred in poverty and inequality in Israel and the US.
- Identify some problems and challenges related to poverty and inequality.

Readings:

Goldscheider, Calvin. 2001. "Ethnic Categorization in Censuses: Comparative Observations from Israel, Canada, and the United States" in *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Censuses* eds. David I Kertzer and Dominique Arel. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3 pp. 71-91.

Week 2: Measurement

a. How is poverty measured in OECD countries?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Compare poverty in different countries.
- Evaluate the effect of welfare transfers on poverty in different countries.

b. How is material hardship measured? How is food insecurity measured?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Interpret and compare different types of measures of poverty, inequality and hardship.
- Be able to find these measures in published data for different countries and different years.

Readings:

Lewin, A. C. and H. Stier. 2017. "The Experience of Material and Emotional Hardship in Israel: Do Some Groups Cope Better than Others?" *Social Indicators Research* 134:305-402.

Mayer, S. E., & Jencks, C. 1989. Poverty and the distribution of material hardship. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 24(1), 88–114. <https://doi.org/10.2307/145934>

Thomas, M.M.C. 2022. Longitudinal Patterns of Material Hardship Among US Families. *Social Indicators Research*, 163, 341–370.

Week 3: Poverty: comparisons over time and place

- a. How have poverty and policy changed?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- * Evaluate welfare policy within its historical and political context.
- * Compare different countries.

Homework: assignment #1 (no grade).

Ben-David D. & H. Bleikh. 2013. [Poverty and inequality over time: In Israel and in the OECD](#). In Dan Ben-David (Ed.), *State of the Nation report: Society, economy and policy 2012*. Jerusalem: Taub Center.

Smeeding T., L. Rainwater, and G. Burtless. 2002. "[United States poverty in a cross-national context](#)" in *Understanding Poverty* eds. S. Danziger and R. Haveman Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, chapter 5.

Mor, S. (2011). Disability and the persistence of poverty: reconstructing disability allowances. *Northwestern Journal of Law and Social Policy*, 6(1), 178-214.

- b. How do countries' welfare policies differ? How do these differences affect poverty and inequality?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Interpret OECD charts on poverty and inequality in different countries and tie differences to policy.
- Apply theories of welfare regime to data on poverty and inequality.

Readings:

Esping-Andersen, Gosta. 2015. "[Welfare Regimes and Social Stratification](#)" *Journal of European Social Policy*, 25:124-134.

Gal, John. 2010. "Is There an Extended Family of Mediterranean Welfare States." *Journal of European Social Policy* 20(4): 283-300.

Week 4: ISSP Data

- What are ISSP data?
- How can we download them and use them to learn about poverty and policy in an international perspective?
- Please bring your computer to this class.

<https://www.gesis.org/en/issp/modules/issp-modules-by-topic/social-inequality/2019>

Homework:

Choose a country(or two) and an item related to poverty and inequality and run frequencies.

Examples: attitudes towards inequality, food insecurity, attitudes about who is responsible to reduce inequality.

Week 5: Policy

a. How do different welfare regimes deal with poverty?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Compare countries' policy and policy.
- Apply theories that tie policy to poverty and inequality.

Homework: assignment # 2.

Readings:

Korpi, Walter and Joakim Palme. 1998. "The Paradox of Redistribution and Strategies of Equality: Welfare State Institutions, Inequality, and Poverty in the Western Countries." *American Sociological Review* 63: 661-687.

Fouarge, D., & Layte, R. (2005). Welfare regimes and poverty dynamics: the duration and recurrence of poverty spells in Europe. *Journal of Social Policy*, 34(3), 407-426.

Gal, J. & A. Doron. 2000. "Dealing with the Elusive Welfare-to-work Issue: the Case of Poverty Traps in Israel." *Social Policy and Administration*, 34(3):253-273.

b. What do poverty and policy look like from the point of view of people living in poverty?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Compare literature based on qualitative methods and quantitative methods.
- Apply theories that explain poverty, using different types of data.

Readings:

Edin, K. and L. Lein. 1997. "Work, welfare, and single mothers' economic survival strategies." *American Sociological Review* 62: 253-266.

Strier, Roni. 2005. "Gendered Realities of Poverty: Men and Women's Views of Poverty in Jerusalem." *Social Service Review* 79(2): 344-367.

Week 6: Gender

a. Why are there gender differences in earnings? Is there a motherhood penalty?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Apply theories that explain gender differences in earnings.
- Critique theories.
- Formulate new questions on gender inequality.

Readings:

Haberfeld, Yitcahk and Yinon Cohen. 2007. "Gender, Ethnic and National Earning Gaps In Israel: The Role of Rising Inequality." *Social Science Research*, 36: 654-672.

Correll, S., S. Benard, and I. Paik. 2007. Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty? *American Journal of Sociology* 112(5):1297-1338.

Stier, H. & M. Endeweld. 2015. Employment transitions and labor market exits: Age and gender in the Israeli labor market. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 41:93-103.

- b. Why is there a gender difference in poverty? What is the feminization of poverty?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Compare the feminization of poverty in different countries and tie it to demographic processes and to policy.

Discussion: how may differences in fertility affect the reproduction of inequality?

Readings:

Casper, Lynne M, Sara S. McLanahan and Irwin Garfinkel. 1994. "The Gender-Poverty Gap: What We Can Learn from Other Countries" *American Sociological Review* 59:594-605.

McLanahan, S. S., & Kelly, E. L. (2006). The feminization of poverty. *Handbook of the Sociology of Gender*, 127-145.

Stier. Haya, & Alisa C. Lewin 2002. Does women's employment reduce poverty? Evidence from Israel. *Work, Employment and Society* 16(2): 211-230.

Week 7: Working and poor.

- a. Who are the working poor?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Apply economic and sociological theories to explain the increase in in-work poverty.
- Explain how in-work poverty differs in different contexts.

Homework: assignment # 3.

Readings:

Desmond, M., & Gershenson, C. (2016). Housing and employment insecurity among the working poor. *Social Problems*, 63(1), 46-67.

Levanon, Asaf and Evgeny Saburov. 2018. "[Changes in the Demographic antecedents of Poverty among Workers in Israel](#)" in *Handbook on In-Work Poverty*, Eds Lohmann and Marx, Edward Elgar pubs, pp 434-448.

- b. Student presentations of findings from ISSP data.

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Conduct international comparisons.
- Apply theories to provide explanations for differences between countries.
- Formulate new questions and plan new comparisons.

Week 8: Poverty and hardship over the life course

- a. Do poverty and hardship change over the life course?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Apply economic and sociological theories to explain why poverty and hardship may change over the life course.

Reading:

Mirowsky, John, and Catherine E. Ross. 1999. "Economic Hardship across the Life Course" *American Sociological Review*, 64: 548 – 569.

- b. Why do people work post-retirement?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Apply economic and sociological theories to explain the extent to which pensions prevent poverty.
- Compare different countries.

Readings:

Doron, Israel and Tal Golan. 2007. "Aging, Globalization, and the Legal Construction of "Residence": The case of Old-Age Pensions in Israel. *Elder Law Journal* 15(1):1-50.

Lewin, Alisa C. and Haya Stier. 2003. "Immigration, State Support, and the Economic Well-being of the Elderly in Israel" *Research on Aging* 25(3):195-223.

Week 9: Family, poverty and inequality

- a. Does marital instability have long term effects on poverty and hardship?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Evaluate long term effects of divorce on poverty.
- Compare long term effects by country.
- Develop a research agenda to investigate long term effects of poverty in different welfare regimes.

Readings:

Kaplan, Amit & Herbst, Anat. 2015. "Stratified patterns of divorce: Earnings, education, and gender" *Demographic Research* 32 (34):949-982.

Lewin, Alisa C. and Haya Stier 2018. "Marital Status, Gender, and Material Hardship: Evidence from Israel". *Advances in Life Course Research* 35:46-56.

Homework:

Choose two countries from ISSP 2019 data and an item that interests you. Run tables comparing the countries. For example, compare attitudes on Who is responsible to reduce inequality in different countries. Or, choose one country and compare based on a socio-demographic attribute. For example: Personal economic hardship and attitudes towards inequality. Personal economic hardship and food insecurity. Prepare tables to present in class next week.

- b. What are the long term effects of family characteristics and poverty in childhood?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Evaluate long term effects of poverty, inequality and disadvantage.

Homework: reaction paper #4.

Semyonov, Moshe & Noah Lewin-Epstein. 2001. The impact of parental transfers on living standards of married children. *Social Indicators Research* 54: 115-137.

Shavit, Y. Friedman, I, Gal, J. Vaknin, D V. 2018. Emerging Early Childhood Inequality: [On the Relationship Between Poverty, Sensory Stimulation, Child Development, and Achievement](#). In D. Ben David (Ed.), *State of the Nation report: Society, economy and policy*(pp. 3-47). Jerusalem: Taub Center.

Week 10: Inequality, poverty and affluence

- a. Why do we know more about poverty than about affluence?

Readings:

Iceland, J. (2019). Racial and ethnic inequality in poverty and affluence, 1959-2015. *Population Research and Policy Review* 38, 615-654.

Massey, D. (1996). The age of extremes: Concentrated affluence and poverty in the Twenty-First Century. *Demography* 33(4), 395-412.

b. student presentations of country comparisons from ISSP data.

Class activity: students will present their findings in class.

Week 11: Poverty and COVID-19

b. How did COVID affect people living in poverty?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Evaluate different effects of COVID on people living in poverty and compare effects to the entire population.

Readings:

Lewin, Alisa C., Michal Shamai and Sharon Novikov. 2023. "Surviving in Crisis Mode: The Effect of Material Hardship and Social Support on Emotional Wellbeing among People in Poverty During COVID-19." *Social Indicators Research*, 165:245–265.

Chang, Serina, Emma Pierson, Pang Wei Koh, Jaline Gerardin, Beth Redbird, David Grusky and Jure Leskovec. 2021. "Mobility network models of COVID-19 explain inequities and inform reopening" *Nature*, 589:82-87.

Week 12: Immigrants and inequality

a. Do immigrants experience lower incomes than the native born?

Readings:

Amit, K. ((2012). Social integration and identity of immigrants from western countries, the FSU and Ethiopia in Israel. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35:7, 1287-1310.

Raijman, R., Semyonov, M., & Geffen, R. (2014). Language proficiency among post-1990 immigrants in Israel. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*.

b. Do immigrants experience more poverty than the native-born? Why?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Articulate theories of immigration and how immigration may affect poverty over the life course.

Readings:

Lewin, Alisa C. 2022. "Affluence, Homeownership, and Poverty among Working-Age Immigrants: The Case of Israel." *Population Space and Place*.

O'Neil, K., & Tienda, M. (2014). Age at immigration and the incomes of older immigrants, 1994–2010. *Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 70(2), 291–302.

Week 13: Review

- a. What will the test look like?

How should we study?

Goals: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Be prepared to study for the test.

Class activity: QUIZ (no grade).

- b. Do you have additional questions?

The instructor will hold optional office hours for students with questions.

Please email for an appointment.

Good luck!

Appendix: Details of assignments

Short assignments

Three short assignments, to be submitted three different weeks throughout the semester.

Short assignment 1 – Choose an item from the syllabus and read it carefully. Write 3 multiple choice questions, each with 4 answers. Only one answer should be correct. Please highlight the correct answer. Submit the assignment by 10:15 the day the item will be discussed in class .

Short assignment 2 – choose another item of your choice from the syllabus and read it carefully. Write one question that article answers, and one question it does not answer. Submit the assignment by 10:15 the day the item will be discussed in class .

Short assignment 3- choose another item of your choice from the syllabus and read it carefully. Answer the following four questions, each answer should be limited to no more than one or two sentences .

- i. What is the article's central research question?
- ii. What data were used to answer the research question?
- iii. What is the answer to the research question?
- iv. Did the article convince you? Why?

Friendly note: these four questions can be useful for summarizing all the articles you read.

Oral Assignments:

Each student will present two oral assignments, dates to be coordinated with the instructor. Students can choose between focusing their presentations on: a. readings or on b. analysis of ISSP data. a) Students will present three discussion questions for the class, on the readings, and will conduct the class discussion on these questions. These questions should relate to the main arguments of the week's readings and should tie them to readings and theories we have reviewed in class. b) Presentation of data analysis should focus on describing the tables and then explaining them. The oral presentation will be evaluated according to the following rubric:

Oral Presentation Rubric (10 points)

Oral Presentations	Possible	Earned
Student's questions reflect this week's readings main arguments.	10	
Student guides the class discussion.	5	
Student prepared appropriate answers to the questions.	5	
TOTAL	20	

Final Exam

The final exam will include 5 multiple choice questions (4 points each, 20 points total), 5 yes/no questions + explanation (1 point for correct answer, 4 points for a correct explanation, 25 points, total). One question on a published table or graph (25 points). One essay question, limited to two pages (30 points).