

Economics 450G: Economics of Poverty and Welfare Programs

University of Kentucky

Fall Semester 2006

URL: <http://gatton.uky.edu/Faculty/yelowitz/450G/fall2006.html>

Lectures

Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30-1:45 pm, Business and Economics Building 306.

Relevant info on me

Professor Aaron Yelowitz

Office: 335W Business and Economics Building

Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 10-11 am, 2-4 pm, and by appointment.

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My background: I am an associate professor in the economics department. This is my sixth year at UK. Before I joined UK, I was an assistant professor in the economics department at UCLA, from 1994 to 2001. I received my Ph.D. in economics from MIT in 1994, and my B.A. from UC Santa Barbara in 1990. My research interests have focused on low-income households – especially concerning the housing and health insurance decisions that these groups are faced with. I've also examined living wages and health insurance mandates more recently. In some parts of the course, particularly on the U.S. welfare system, I will incorporate some of my previous research.

Enrolling in this class

If you want to enroll in this class, you need to talk to Debbie Wheeler in the economics department; she handles that.

Course Description

This course is designed to be an introduction to U.S. social welfare policy, with a particular focus on anti-poverty efforts. We will provide an overview of measurements and characteristics of the poor; alternative theoretical explanations of poverty; a historical overview of the major social welfare policies to combat poverty, and an appraisal of recent welfare reform policies. Attention will be given to the relationship between poverty research and current policies, and the effects of race and class on patterns of poverty and policy responses.

Prerequisites

ECO 401 or equivalent or consent of instructor.

Textbook

The required textbook is Bradley R. Schiller, "The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination, 9th Edition," Prentice Hall, 2003 (ISBN 0130385689).

Grading

1. The final is on Thursday, December 14, 2006, 1 pm. The final will be cumulative. It will count for 35% of your grade. It lasts 2 hours.
2. You will be given two midterm tests. The first is on September 28, 2006, and the second is on November 2, 2006. Each will be worth 25% of your grade, for a total of 50%. Each exam will last 75 minutes.
3. Homework: You will be given three homework assignments that will help you prepare for the exams. You are expected to do these on your own, and they will be graded. This will count for 10% of your grade.
4. Class attendance: At five random times during the semester, I will take attendance. This will count for the final 5% of your grade.

Grading Policy

Grades will be based on midterms, homework, attendance and the final exam.

Procedure for re-evaluation of disputed exam scores: Requests must be submitted *in writing* with an explanation of the error the student believes has been made. Written requests and test sheet must be submitted within one week of the date on which the exams are returned. All tests submitted for re-evaluation will be entirely regraded.

University Holidays / Cancelled Classes

According to the university calendar, there will be no class on November 23, 2006, for Thanksgiving.

Economics 450G Course Outline, Fall 2006

I. The Dimensions of Poverty

- A. View of Inequality and Poverty
Schiller, Chapter 1
- B. Inequality
Schiller, Chapter 2
- C. Counting the Poor
Schiller, Chapter 3

II. Causes of Poverty

- A. Labor Force Participation
Schiller, Chapter 4
- B. The Working Poor
Schiller, Chapter 5
- C. Age and Health
Schiller, Chapter 6
- D. Family Size and Structure
Schiller, Chapter 7
- E. The Underclass: Culture and Race
Schiller, Chapter 8
- F. Education and Ability
Schiller, Chapter 9
- G. Discrimination in Education
Schiller, Chapter 10
- H. Discrimination in the Labor Market
Schiller, Chapter 11

III. Policy Options

- A. Welfare Programs
Schiller, Chapter 12
Yelowitz, Quarterly Journal of Economics, 1995
Currie and Yelowitz, Journal of Public Economics, 2000
- B. Social Insurance Programs
Schiller, Chapter 13
- C. Employment Policies
Schiller, Chapter 14
- D. Equal Opportunity Policies
Schiller, Chapter 15
- E. Directions and Prospects
Schiller, Chapter 16