

HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA
(CD 143-05, SOC 149-01, UEP 181-01)

Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30-2:45
Jackson Hall 6 (We may move to the 97 Talbot Ave Classroom)

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Office Hours: Mondays 2:45-4:00 pm and by appointment (strongly encouraged)

Course Assistant: Lun Yan Tom, lunyan.tom@gmail.com (For assistance with volunteering or interview scheduling.)

Course Overview and Objectives:

This course explores the social, economic, and political phenomenon of homelessness in the United States. It is designed to develop your capacity for meaningful inquiry about social problems and what can be done to address them. The complexity of homelessness makes it conducive to generating and pursuing challenging questions for several reasons:

- The meaning of homelessness is ambiguous and socially constructed.
- Policy interventions rest on contentious theories about the causes of homelessness, conflicting priorities about who most needs help and which needs are most pressing, and inconclusive evidence about what works.
- The accumulated knowledge for investigating these questions spans academic disciplines. Interventions span levels of government and engage a variety of actors across policy domains.
- The issue of homelessness has significant social, economic, physical, and moral implications for the individuals and families who experience it directly as well as for those who live in their midst and for society as a whole.
- Homelessness and our responses to homelessness are implicated in our country's legacy of racial, ethnic, gender, and class-based discrimination and conflict.
- The current economic crisis, paradigm shifts in policy, and new approaches to civic engagement raise questions about the potential for doing something different.

Course Structure and Responsibilities:

The course will be run in a discussion format accompanied by brief lectures, individual and group exercises, and guest speakers. In addition to the regular class sessions, each student will participate in the following activities:

Book Groups: Each student will join a group to read and discuss an ethnographic account of individual homeless people, homeless families with children, or homeless youth. Groups will

meet virtually or in person to share thoughts about the reading and generate a list of gleanings and questions for further inquiry for the rest of the class. These groups will also meet once or twice with the instructor. The discussions of the books will form the basis for the mid-term take home essays.

The book options include:

Gowan, Teresa (2010). *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kozol, Jonathan (2012). *Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years among the Poorest Children in America*. New York: Crown Publishers. and Kozol, Jonathan (1988). *Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America*. New York: Crown Publishers. (Excerpts to be determined.)

Gibson, Kristina E. (2011). *Street Kids: Homeless Youth, Outreach, and Policing New York's Streets*. New York: New York University Press.

We will discuss Book Group assignments and other details after the first few sessions of the class. (These books will be available on reserve at Tisch Library and in the campus book store.)

Volunteer Experience or Interview-Based Investigation: Every student will gain first-hand exposure to homelessness in one of two options:

Volunteer Experience: This option involves volunteering *at least* 15 hours over the course of the semester in a homeless shelter, soup kitchen or other setting working directly with homeless people. (This time commitment does not include transportation to the facility.)

Interview-Based Investigation: This option involves investigating one service or advocacy organizations that work towards meeting the needs of homeless people. The first part of this assignment will be to learn about what the organization does from information obtained on its web-site. The second involves an interview with at least two staff members or other people who are involved in the organization's operations. Laurie will provide guidance in designing this investigation to those who choose this option.

These experiences will form the basis of an essay due at the end of the semester. Those who choose the interview-based investigation will write a more extensive paper to describe and analyze their findings. Details for this assignment will be distributed later in the semester.

- **Notify Laurie about which option you will pursue as soon as possible, preferably by the 2nd week of classes.**
- **Please try to make your service placement arrangements as quickly as possible.** The TA – Lun Yan Tom – will provide assistance in locating a suitable placement. However, you are responsible for making contact with your supervisor and arranging the actual days and times of participation. Keep in mind that it can take several attempts to make contact and finalize arrangements.

Early preparation is also critical for the Interview-Based Investigation. Arranging interviews requires planning and coordination that must follow your investigation of the organization.

Reading Assignments:

We will be reading a wide range of types of publications. In addition to the Book Group ethnographies, assigned readings will include scholarly publications from books and academic journals. Government, advocates, and program reports as well as excerpts from legislation, policy documents, and organizational web-sites will also inform our inquiry.

The reading assignments will be determined in relation to the themes that emerge from our discussions in class and in the Book Groups. The Trunk site (and announcements in class and by e-mail) will facilitate communication about these changes. **You are responsible for making sure that you follow the changes that occur.**

All of these resources (apart from the ethnographic accounts for the Book Groups) will be available on the Trunk site for the course. As with any on-line resource, it is your choice whether to read on-line or print a copy for your personal use. **One caution:** If you choose to print materials **PLEASE download before printing and print only what you need** -- often the assigned reading is only a portion of a voluminous document, and you will only need to print a few pages.

Students are also urged to read *The Boston Globe* and/or *The New York Times* on a daily basis to keep up with current events pertaining to homelessness. In addition, there is a host of Internet sources that you may want to consult. (A list will be posted on the Trunk site). We will be discussing news articles from time to time in class – you are encouraged to circulate, post on Trunk, or mention in class any relevant articles you read.

Reflections on the Readings and Exercises: All students are expected to read purposefully rather than passively. It is more important to engage the readings so that you learn from the experience of reading than to be able to summarize every theme or nuance. Questions to guide your active reading will be posted on the Trunk web-site.

Each student will post *brief* reflections (no more than 250 words) on the readings by Sunday evening (by 8pm) before our Monday afternoon class. These reflections can respond to the questions for active reading. You may also post questions for clarification or raise topics you'd like to explore in greater depth. By 12:30pm on Wednesday afternoons, each student will comment *briefly* on at least one prior post of another student. Any of these posts can reference the readings assigned for Wednesday as well as Monday's class session.

The timeliness and quality of these posts will inform the assessment of your grade for class participation. Quality posts are those that are inquisitive, insightful, provocative, and curious.

Written Assignments: There are three written assignments in addition to the weekly reflections.

- 1. Mid-Term -- Short Essays:** A take-home exam composed of short essay questions will allow you to draw connections between your Book Group's ethnography and the themes we have covered in the class discussions and readings.

- 2. Essay on your volunteer or interview-based investigation:** Those doing the volunteer service option will write an account of your experience that reflects on how the interactions influenced your understanding of homelessness (about 5 pages).

Those doing the interview-based investigation of an organization will write a more extensive description of the organization and its work, summary of the interview/s, and reflections on how the investigation illuminated your understanding of interventions to address homelessness. (*Details of this assignment to be discussed with Laurie early in the semester.*)

- 3. Public Education and Advocacy Project or Analytic Essay:** The idea of this assignment is to explore how ideas about homelessness are conveyed to the general public. (You may submit a proposal for this to be a collaborative project.)

- Critique one film, set of news clippings, radio or television broadcast, or other public media (fictional or factual) that depicts homeless people.
- Create a public education promotion or advocacy appeal about some aspect of homelessness that targets the general public. This could be a written report, a presentation (submit the PowerPoint or Prezi), a short story, child's picture book, video collage, or any other format.

Each of these projects should aim to demonstrate your synthesis of the themes covered in the course. Details on expectations will be distributed later in the semester.

Class Participation:

Active participation in the class and Book Group discussions is a critical to the success of the course – for each individual and for our collective inquiry. Your questions and thoughts and challenges to the readings, lectures, and other observations will *steer* the progression of the course. Expressing your thoughts and questions is one part of active participation. Equally important is eliciting responses from your classmates and engaging them in the discussion.

Naïve Question Pledge: To reinforce the adage that there are no stupid questions, you are each required to ask at least 5 questions you feel might be considered naïve or embarrassing over the course of the semester.

Schedule of Assignments

Assignment	Due Date	% of Grade
Decision about volunteer or interview-based investigation	By the end of the second week of classes	--
<i>Mid-term</i> : short essay questions drawing connections	Friday, March 15	30%
Essay on your volunteer* or interview-based investigation	April 29	25%
Creative Project or Analytic Essay	<i>Proposal</i> : Friday, March 29 <i>Final</i> : Friday, May 3	30%
Weekly reflections on the readings and Participation in class discussions and Book Group	ongoing	15%

* This grade includes the expectation that you will have fulfilled the required hours for the volunteer service *before* completing the paper. You must submit a form evidencing completion of the minimum hours of service, signed by your supervisor, in order to receive a passing grade for the course.

All work should be submitted electronically to the Trunk site (Assignment Section) by uploading the documents in Word format. Please use 11 or 12 point font, double-spacing, and 1 inch margins.

All work *must* be submitted on the due date. If you expect to have difficulty meeting a deadline, you must request an extension at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline (except in case of emergency). Work submitted late (without a previously approved extension) will lose 5 points per day.

READING ASSIGNMENTS & SCHEDULE

The required readings will be posted on the Trunk site for the course, either as links to electronic sources or as downloadable “pdf” files. Additional references on each of the course themes will also be posted on the site.

Note: *These readings are subject to change in response to the topics that emerge in the class discussions and to adapt to different learning and reading styles as they develop. Be sure to check the Trunk site each week for updates and additional reading and preparation guidance.*

Wed. 1/16	<p>Introduction to the Course</p> <p><i>Questions:</i> How do we see the homeless? What do we want to know about homelessness? Why do we want to know more?</p>
Mon. 1/21	<p>No Class</p> <p><i>Contemplate:</i> What would Martin Luther King Jr. encourage us to ask about homelessness in America in 2013?</p>
Wed. 1/23	<p>The Scope of the Problem and the Challenge of the Goals to Address It</p> <p><i>Questions:</i> Who is homeless? Is homelessness a growing problem? What are the goals for addressing it?</p> <p><i>Explore</i> the following reports to think about these questions. You don’t need to read every word (or even every page). Excavate the documents to ascertain what the report compilers stress is important. Consider your reactions to the numbers and the articulated goals. What is confusing? What are you curious about? (Note: These documents are quite long. Peruse them on-line before considering whether and how much to print.)</p> <p><i>The 2011 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (November 2011).</i> The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development.</p> <p><i>The State of Homelessness in America 2012: A Research Report on Homelessness.</i> National Alliance to End Homelessness.</p> <p><i>Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness 2010.</i> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness.</p>
Mon 1/28 & Wed. 1/30	<p>Framing the Homelessness Issue</p> <p><i>Questions:</i> How have social scientists and policymakers conceptualized what homelessness is and why it occurs? What have they seen as the pressing questions for investigation? What is driving their inquiry?</p> <p>Lee, B. A., Tyler, K. A., & Wright, J. D. (2010). “The New Homelessness Revisited.” In <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>, Vol 36 (Vol. 36, pp. 501-521).</p> <p>Rochefort, D. A. & Cobb, R.W. (1992). “Framing and Claiming the Homelessness Problem.”</p>

	<p><i>New England Journal of Public Policy</i>. Vol. 8(1):49-65.</p> <p>Nooe, R. A. & Patterson, D.A. (2010). “The Ecology of Homelessness.” <i>Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment</i>. Vol. 20: 105-52.</p> <p>Hopper, K. (1991/7) “Homelessness Old and New: The Matter of Definition.” <i>Housing Policy Debate</i>, Vol. 2(3). (Recommended)</p> <p>Rosenthal, R. & Foscarinis M. (2006) “Responses to Homelessness: Past Policies, Future Directions, and a Right to Housing.” In <i>A Right to Housing: Foundation for a New Social Agenda</i>. Bratt, R.G., Stone M.E., and Hartman, C. (Eds). Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 316-39. (Recommended)</p>
<p>Mon 2/4 & Wed 2/6</p>	<p>Meeting “The Homeless”</p> <p>Speakers from the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance’s Homeless Faces Speakers Bureau will join us for Monday’s class.</p> <p>Questions: Who are “the homeless”? What are their stories? What challenges do they face?</p> <p><i>Spare Change.</i> Buy a copy of the current issue of this “street newspaper” that was founded by homeless people and is written, produced, and sold largely by homeless people. You’ll find people selling it (\$1.00) in Harvard Square, Porter Square, near Whole Foods, and many other locations.</p> <p><i>Families with Children:</i></p> <p>National Center on Family Homelessness (2011) “The Characteristics and Needs of Families Experiencing Homelessness” (fact sheet).</p> <p>Rog & Buckner (2007). “Homeless Families and Children.” <i>National Symposium on Homelessness Research</i>.</p> <p><i>Youth:</i></p> <p>Toro, Dworsky, and Fowler (2007). “Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches. <i>National Symposium on Homelessness Research</i>.</p> <p>National Network For Youth, Issue Brief: “Consequences of Youth Homelessness”http://www.nn4youth.org/system/files/IssueBrief_Youth_Homelessness.pdf</p> <p>Book Group Selection: Choose a Book Group by the end of this week.</p>
<p>Mon 2/11 & Wed 2/13</p>	<p>The Context of Homelessness: Access to Affordable Housing</p> <p>Questions: How does the housing market influence homelessness? Why does the system for subsidizing housing leave people without access to safe and affordable housing? Who is most affected and why?</p> <p>Wright, Donley & Gotham (2008) “Housing Policy, the Low-Income Housing Crisis, and the Problem of Homelessness.” In McNamara, R. H. (Ed.) <i>Homelessness In America, Volume 2. Causes of Homelessness</i>. Westport, CT: Praeger Perspectives, pp. 31-48.</p> <p>National Low Income Housing Coalition resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Out of Reach: America’s Forgotten Housing Crisis.” 2012. (Read the Introduction – p. 1-5; look at the data for Massachusetts or your home state.)

	<p>- Research Note on worsening affordability gap for lowest income households. (4 pages)</p> <p>Hartman, Chester (2006) “The Case for a Right to Housing.”</p> <p>Khadduri, J. (2010) “Rental Subsidies: Reducing Homelessness.” Ellen, G. E. and O’Flaherty, B. (Eds) New York: Russell Sage, pp. 59-88 (Recommended).</p> <p>Olsen, Edgar (2010). “Fundamental Housing Policy Reforms to End Homelessness.” Ellen, G. E. and O’Flaherty, B. (Eds) New York: Russell Sage, pp. 89-109. (Recommended).</p>
<p>Mon 2/20 & Thurs. 2/21</p>	<p>Book Group discussion sessions.</p> <p><i>Stay tuned for details and logistics.</i></p> <p><i>Note: We will meet on Thursday instead of Wednesday this week.</i></p>
<p>Mon 2/25 & Wed 2/27</p>	<p>Holes in the Safety Net and the Challenges of Accessing Limited Resources</p> <p>Questions: What resources does the social welfare system provide to help people make ends meet? What prevents people from accessing these resources to survive, overcome, or prevent homelessness? Who are the targets of the social welfare system and how do patterns of racism, sexism, and classism influence who receives assistance in our society?</p> <p>Burt and Nightingale (2010) “U.S. Social Policy and the Social Safety Net in Historical Perspective” pp. 1-30</p> <p>Acs and Nichols (2010) “America Insecure: Changes in the Economic Security of American Families” Low-Income Working Paper 16. The Urban Institute. (Recommended)</p> <p>Meyer and Wallace (2009) “Poverty Levels and Trends in Comparative Perspective.” In <i>Changing Poverty, Changing Policies</i>. Cancian and Danziger (Eds), New York: Russell Sage. (Recommended)</p> <p>Corporation for Supportive Housing (2011), <i>Silos to Systems: Preserving and Strengthening Families and Children Experiencing Recurring Child Welfare System Encounters and Housing Crises</i></p> <p>GAO (2000) <i>Homelessness: Barriers to Using Mainstream Programs</i> (p. 4-17).</p> <p>Gordon, L. (2002) “Who Deserves Help? Who Must Provide?” and Neubeck, K. “Attacking Welfare Racism/Honoring Poor People’s Human Rights.” In Albelda & Withorn (Eds) <i>Lost Ground: Welfare Reform, Poverty, and Beyond</i>. Cambridge: South End Press, pp. 9-25 and 113-27.</p>
<p>Mon 3/4</p>	<p>Debt & Foreclosures</p> <p>Eviction (Without) Notice: Renters and the Foreclosure Crisis: A Report by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty December 2012</p> <p>From Foreclosure to Homelessness, National Assoc. to End Homelessness, 2009</p>
<p>Wed 3/6</p>	<p>Criminalizing the Homeless and Moral Responses to Pandhandlers</p>

	<p>Donley and Wright (2008) “Cleaning Up the Streets: Community Efforts to Combat Homelessness by Criminalizing Homeless Behaviors” in McNamara (Ed.) <i>Homelessness in America</i>, Westport, CT: Praeger, pp. 75-91.</p> <p>National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and National Coalition for the Homeless, <i>Homes, Not Handcuffs: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities</i> (July, 2009) http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/crimreport/CrimzReport_2009.pdf (Excerpts to be determined).</p> <p>Dromi, S. M. (2012). Penny for Your Thoughts: Beggars and the Exercise of Morality in Daily Life. <i>Sociological Forum</i>, 27(4), 847-871.</p>
Mon 3/11 & Wed 3/13	<p>Book Groups discussions and presentations on gleanings to the class in preparation for mid-term (Due Friday 3/15).</p>
Spring Break 3/18-24	
Mon 3/25 & Wed 3/27	<p>Sheltering the Homeless and Providing Services</p> <p><i>Questions:</i> How do services and programs help homeless people, including those living in shelters or transitional housing?</p> <p>“Ending Family Homelessness: National Trends and Local System Responses.” Corporation for Supportive Housing & National Alliance to End Homelessness. Prepared for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, October 2012.</p> <p>Perl, L. et. al. (2012). <i>Homelessness: Targeted Federal Programs and Recent Legislation</i>. Congressional Research Service Report to Congress. (Skim this digest of programs.)</p> <p>Burt & Spellman (2007) “Changing Homeless and Mainstream Service Systems: Essential Approaches to Ending Homelessness.” <i>National Symposium on Homelessness Research</i>.</p> <p>Stories of residents of supportive housing. http://www.csh.org/supportive-housing-facts/stories/</p> <p>Additional resources on a variety of services for different groups of homeless people and families will be distributed to small groups of students in advance of this week’s sessions. (We may also extend this broad topic over additional sessions.)</p>
Mon 4/1 & Wed 4/3	<p>Challenging Relationships Between Programs & Neighbors and Between Staff and Clientele</p> <p>NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)</p> <p>Iglesias, T. (2002) Managing Local Opposition to Affordable Housing: A New Approach to NIMBY. <i>Journal of Affordable Housing</i>, 12: 78-122.</p> <p>Corporation for Supportive Housing (2006). “Thinking Beyond “NIMBY”: Building Community Support for Supportive Housing.” <i>Family Matters: A Guide to Developing Family Supportive Housing</i>.</p>

	<p>Ross, J. et al (2002) The NIMBY Report. <i>The Olmstead Factor: Integrating Housing for People with Disabilities</i>. National Low Income Housing Coalition.</p> <p>Staff-Client Relationships:</p> <p>Funiciello, T. (1993). "The Brutality of the Bureaucracy." In <i>Tyranny of Kindness: Dismantling the Welfare System to End Poverty In America</i>. pp. 24-53.</p> <p>Wasserman & Clair (2010) "Homeless Services: Healing the Sick," In <i>At Home on the Street: People, Poverty and a Hidden Culture of Homelessness</i>, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, pp. 171-97.</p>
Mon 4/8 & Wed 4/10	<p>Housing First/Rapid Re-Housing</p> <p>Questions: For which groups among the homeless is it most important to provide housing? Is housing enough?</p> <p>Gladwell, M. (2006) "Million-Dollar Murray," <i>The New Yorker</i>, February 13, 2006.</p> <p>Culhane, D. P., Metraux, S., & Byrne, T. (2011). A prevention-centered approach to homelessness assistance: a paradigm shift? <i>Housing Policy Debate</i>, 21(2), 295-315.</p> <p>Meschede, T. (2007) <i>The First Two Years of Housing First in Quincy, Massachusetts: This Place Gives Me Peace, Happiness, and Hope.</i> Boston, MA: Center for Social Policy, UMass Boston.</p> <p>Culhane, D. and Byrne, T. (2010). Ending Family Homelessness in Massachusetts: A New Approach for the Emergency Assistance (EA) program. A White Paper commissioned by the Paul and Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation.</p>
Mon 4/15	<p>Patriots Day – No Class</p>
Wed 4/17	<p>Preventing Homelessness and Longer-Range Plans</p> <p>Questions: How high a priority should preventing homelessness be compared to helping people who are already homeless? Is it important to have a long range plan to contend with homelessness?</p> <p>Friedman, D. H. et al (2007). <i>Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Housing Stability: A Comparative Analysis</i>. A report prepared for the Boston Foundation and other funders by the Center for Social Policy, UMass Boston.</p> <p>National Alliance to End Homelessness. A Plan: Not A Dream. How to End Homelessness in Ten Years.</p>
Mon 4/22	<p>Competing Priorities; Hard Decisions</p> <p>This class session will include guest speakers from the Massachusetts Dept. of Housing and Community Development, the advocacy community, and other keen observers of the history of Massachusetts' homelessness policy. The date for this session may shift to accommodate their schedules.</p> <p><i>Initial readings to prepare you to ask insightful questions:</i></p> <p>McKim, J. "State to end placing of homeless in motels: Cites cost, inadequacy; aims for '14 phaseout", <i>Boston Globe</i>, January 2, 2013.</p> <p>Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (2010). A Bridge to Where? Short-term Housing</p>

	<p>Assistance for Homeless Families in Massachusetts, MLRI</p> <p>Bassuk & Geller (2006) “The Role of Housing and Services in Ending Family Homelessness.” <i>Housing Policy Debate</i>, Vol. (17(4): 781-806.</p> <p>Testimonies before the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, December 13, 2012</p> <p>Schon, D.& Rein, M. (1994). “Homelessness in Massachusetts.” In <i>Frame Reflection: Toward the Resolution of Intractable Policy Controversies</i>. New York: Basic Books, pp. 129-61 (Recommended)</p>
Wed 4/24	<p>Advocacy and Movement Building</p> <p>Mosley, J. E. (2012). Keeping the Lights On: How Government Funding Concerns Drive the Advocacy Agendas of Nonprofit Homeless Service Providers. <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i>, 22(4), 841-866.</p> <p>Rosenthal, R. (1996) “Dilemmas of Local Anithomelessness Movements.” In <i>Homelessness in America</i>. Baumol, J. (Ed). Oryx Press, pp. 201-12.</p> <p>Croteau, D., & Hicks, L. D. (2003). Coalition Framing and the Challenge of a Consonant Frame Pyramid: The Case of a Collaborative Response to Homelessness. <i>Social Problems</i>, 50(2), 251-272. (Optional)</p>
Mon 4/29	<p>Wrapping Up and Moving Forward</p> <p>Your reflections on the course and your service or interview-based investigation.</p> <p>Short presentations on your Public Education and Advocacy Projects or Analytic Essays.</p> <p>It is possible that we will schedule an additional meeting time to accommodate the presentations.</p>