

An Introduction to the Processes of Impoverishment: How Do Some of Us Make of Others of Us Poor?

Course Description:

“Processes of Impoverishment” is an interdisciplinary course dealing with limited topics in economics, political science, sociology, literature, and law. The course examines how some people make others poor through the three power hierarchies all societies maintain in different patterns—the hierarchies of economic, political, and social power. The economic processes of impoverishment are a combination of exploitation and marginalization. The political processes are the artificial creation of powerlessness and the normalization of violence. The sociological process is cultural imperialism. Each of these five processes is institutionalized by feedback loops that reinforce the roles of the enriched vs. the impoverished.

The economic processes of impoverishment are counterparts of the processes of enrichment. Because one can only be enriched either by increasing productivity or by receiving transfers from others, the two modes of impoverishment are marginalization, that is, the denial of access to productive resources or the prerequisites for their use, and exploitation, that is, the institutionalized privilege of receipt of the benefit of the labor of others. The rich are normally enriched by combinations of both methods, and the poor are normally impoverished by both. Both processes, however, cannot be institutionalized without the use of various elements of cultural imperialism, the creation of powerlessness, and the normalization of violence. The first unit sets forth this theoretical framework.

The second unit examines the particular means by which exploitation and marginalization work so that it is impossible for some people to become and remain impoverished. Thirteen processes are discussed in terms of the five types of oppression. Some of these processes work primarily at an international level, some at national levels, some locally, and they exhibit different political, economic, and social mechanisms.

Understanding these thirteen processes, however, allows one to see only how some people must be enriched at the expense of others, but does not let one see who is vulnerable to impoverishment, why the particular groups of people who become and remain poor are poor. The third unit examines six categories of people who are predictably poor and asks what their particular vulnerabilities are that their social context converts into impoverishment.

The fourth unit gives an overview of some efforts to alleviate some of the processes of impoverishment under present circumstances.

The purpose of the course is to provide insight and to stimulate involvement. A comprehensive course would take much more than a semester.

Preliminary List of 30 Sequenced Topics and Readings:

Unit 1) *What Is Poverty?: How Can it be Defined in its Context?*

- a) *What are the Basic Ways Income Can be Distributed?:*
George Bernard Shaw, *The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Socialism, Capitalism, Sovietism, and Fascism*, (1928) ch 2-14, pp. 6-49, (RR1: 81-102)
- b) *Impoverishment is a Process Embedded in Struggles for Three Types of Power:*
Bertrand Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis*, (1938) ch 3: “The Forms of Power” pp. 25-34, (RR1: 58-63)
- c) *Five Interacting Types of Institutionalized Oppression Create Poverty:*
Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, (1990) ch 2, “The Five Faces of Oppression” pp. 39-65, (RR1: 63-76)
- d) *The Normal Activities of People Trying to Improve their Own Lives Impoverishes People:*
Robert Greene, *48 Laws of Power*, (1999), “Contents” pp ix-xvi, (RR1: 77-80)
- e) *The Way We Measure Poverty Affects our Concept of it.*
Paul Streeten, *Thinking about Development*, (1995) section I, “Evolution of Development Thought” ch. 7, “Poverty Concepts and Measurement,” pp. 28-55.

Unit 2) *As the World Runs Now, Why Does Somebody Always Have to be Poor?*

- a) *British Colonialism Impoverished India as a Whole:*

- Bipan Chandra, Essays on Colonialism, ch 4: “The Colonial Legacy: The Case of India”, pp. 79-112: (RR1: 1-17)
- b) *Patterns of Rural Land Ownership Patterns Impoverish the Majority:*
D.A. Low, The Egalitarian Moment: Asia & Africa 1950-1980 (1996) ch 1 “Landlord Abolition and the Rural Order: Egypt, India” pp. 1-30, (RR1: 108-122)
- c) *Exploitation of Surplus Value Impoverishes Laborers:*
Michel Chossudovsky, The Globalization of Poverty (1997), ch 3 “The Global Cheap-Labour Economy” pp 75-98 (RR1: 127-138)
Henry Mayhew, “Of the Dustmen of London” (1851) from S. Subramanian, ed., Measurement of Equality and Poverty (1997) pp 54-80, (S1: 81-89)
- d) *Banking practices & priorities Impoverish All Holders of Currency:*
Margrit Kennedy, Interest and Inflation Free Money (1995) ch 1 “Four Basic Misconceptions About Money” pp. 17-32 (RR1: 138-146)
- e) *The Bretton Woods Institutions Impoverish All Indebted Countries:*
Michel Chossudovsky, The Globalization of Poverty (1997) ch 1 “The Globalization of Poverty” pp 33-43 (RR1: 146-151)
Noam Chomsky, “Introduction” to Phyllis Bennis & Michel Moushabeck, eds., Altered States: A Reader in the New World Order (1993) pp 1-12 (RR1: 151-157)
Arjun Makhijani, “Economic Apartheid in the New World Order” in Id. pp 107-116
- f) *The International Currency System Impoverishes 85% of All People:*
Richard Duffee, “What the World Bank Knows But Won’t Tell You” with Spreadsheet and Explanation of Spreadsheet.
- g) *Anti-democratic “Growth” Impoverishes the People of Most Countries :*
Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, Jose Antonia Cheibab, Fernando Limongi, Democracy & Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990 (2000)
“Conclusion” pp 269-278 (S1: 161-165)
- h) *Housing Segregation Impoverishes Inhabitants of Ghettos:*
Douglas S. Massey & Nancy Denton, American Apartheid (1993) subchapter “How to Build an Underclass” pp 182-185, (RR1: 186-187)
Id., ch 5 “The Creation of Underclass Communities” pp. 115-147, (S1: 182-198)
Andre Beteille, Caste, Class, and Power, (1965/96) map: “Settlement Plan of Sripuram” p 27
- i) *Poor Public Health & Environmental Degradation Impoverishes the Vulnerable:*
Centre for Science and the Environment, State of India’s Environment, issue 2: The Second Citizens’ Report 1984-5 (1985/96) from ch on “Health,” subchapter “The Bhopal Disaster” pp 206-232, (S1: 199-225)
- j) *The Creation of Artificial Dependency Impoverishes the Already Poor:*
Ross Coggins, “The Development Set” (RR1: 189)
Graham Hancock, Lords of Poverty (1989) “Conclusion” pp 187-193 (RR1: 189-192)
- k) *Media Campaigns Turn the Middle Class Against the Poor:*
Friedrick Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England (1845) “The Attitude of the Bourgeoisie towards the Proletariat” pp 275-287 (S1: 226-232)
Oscar Lewis, La Vida (1965) “The Culture of Poverty” pp xlii-lix, (RR1: 193-198)
Herbert J. Gans, The War Against the Poor ch 3 “The Dangers of the “Underclass” and Other Labels” pp 58-73, (RR1: 199-206)
Noam Chomsky & Edward Herman, Manufacturing Consent (1988/94), Tables 1-1 and 2-1, pp 6-7 & 41-42, (RR1: 207-208)
- l) *Failure of Essential Institutions Prevents the Poor from Rising:*
Jean Dreze & Amartya Sen, Indian Development (1998) ch 1 “Radical Needs and Moderate Reforms” pp. 1-28, (S1: 56-71)
Jean Dreze & Amartya Sen, India: Economic Development & Social Opportunity (1995) ch 6 “Basic Education as a Political Issue” pp 109-139 (RR1: 222-237)
Paolo Friere, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, ch 1 pp 27-56 (S1: 233-248)
- m) *The Black Economy Secretly Impoverishes Us:*
Arun Kumar, The Black Economy in India (1999) “Consequences of the Black Economy” pp 154-192, (RR1: 238-257)

Arthur Bonner, *Averting the Apocalypse* (1990) ch 28 “Bihar: Blindings and Massacres” pp 196-203 (S1: 296-299)

Unit 3) Which Particular People Become and Remain Impoverished?

- a) *Untouchability and racism impoverish groups who are marginalized in order to maintain the exploitation of other groups:*
Richard Duffee, “Prejudicial Exploitation” (1999) pp 1-34 (RR1: 337-370)
Babasaheb Ambedkar, “Annihilation of Caste” sections 2-17 in Collected Works vol. 1, pp 38-63, (RR1: 371-383)
Gerald E. Berreman, “The Brahmanical View of Caste” in Dipankar Gupta, ed., *Social Stratification* (1991) pp 84-92 (S1: 436-440)
Joan Mencher, “The Caste System Upside Down” in *Id.*, pp 93-109 (S1: 440-448)
- b) *Indigenous Peoples are Impoverished to Exploit Resources they Need:*
Patrick McCully, Silenced Rivers (1998) ch 3 “Temples of Doom: The Human Consequences of Dams” pp. 73-106 (RR1: 391-408)
- c) *Men Impoverish Women and Children:*
Ruth Sidel, Women and Children Last (1986) “ch 1 “Who are the Poor?”
Pp 1-26 (S1: 454-467)
Id. ch 2 “The New Poor” pp 27-47, (RR1: 419-429)
- d) *The Children of the Already Impoverished are Exploited:*
International Labor Organization, “The Problem of Child Slavery,” ch 5 of Bonded Labor (2000) pp. 187-216, (RR1: 434-463)
- e) *The Already Marginalized are Driven to Desperation and Death:*
B.B. Pande, “Vagrants, Beggars, and Status Offenders,” ch 12 of U. Baxi, Law and Poverty: Critical Essays, pp. 248-276 (RR1: 464-477) last half only
- f) *The Physically Handicapped & Mentally Challenged are Prevented from Escaping their Marginalization:*
Joseph P. Shapiro, *No Pity* (1993) Introduction: “You Just Don’t Understand” pp. 3-11

Unit 4) Can the Notion of Implementing Rights Improve the Lot of the Poor?:

- a) *What Would the Human Rights Regime Need to do to Eliminate Poverty?:*
Henry Shue, Basic Rights, (1980/96) ch 1 & 2, “Security and Subsistence” and “Correlative Duties” pp 13-64 (RR1: 257-283)
- b) *What do Human Rights Conventions Claim about Poverty?:*
UN, International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) pp 229-234 (RR1: 283-288)
Philip Alston, “International Law and the Right to Food” from Asbjorn Eide, Wenche Barth Eide, Susantha Goonatilake, Joan Gussow, & Omawale, eds., Food as a Human Right (1984) pp 162-174 (S1: 327-333)
- c) *How Well Does India Implement Human Rights?:*
Charles Humana, World Human Rights Guide, 3rd ed. (1992) “India” 4pp. (RR1: 298-300)
- d) *What can Lawyers do for the Poor?:*
Stephen B. Bright, “Counsel for the Poor: The Death Sentence Not for the Worst Crime but for the Worst Lawyer,” in Hugo A. Bedau, ed., The Death Penalty in America (1997) pp 275-301, (S1: 281-295)
- e) *What can Everyone who has More than the Average do for Those with Less?*
Richard Duffee, “An Ethical Basis for Global Egalitarianism”
- f) *What can the Impoverished do for Themselves and Each Other?*
Arthur Bonner, Averting the Apocalypse (1990) ch 12 “Creating a New Revolutionary Class” pp 92-99, (S1: 386-389)

Richard Duffee