Low Wage Women and Work

SPP/Political Science 730                        Mary Corcoran
Social Work 818                                 764-9517
Winter 2002                                     406 Lorch Hall
                                                Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30-2:30 pm

CONTENT: This course is in 3 sections. In Section 1 (Topics I-III), we briefly review and outline some of the major arguments about women’s work in the feminist theory, economics, sociological and poverty literatures.

In Section 2 (Topics IV-VIII), we outline the trends in women’s employment outcomes, we examine quantitative and qualitative evidence on how race, ethnicity, space, economic restructuring, contingent work, part-time work, immigration, and welfare programs influence women’s economic outcomes.

In Section 3 (Topics IX-XII), we examine 4 public policy and employment issues: affirmative action; sexual harassment; the minimum wage, EITC and employment policies; and immigration policy.

Organization and Requirements

All required readings are marked with an “*”. All other readings are recommended.

In Section 1 (3 class sessions), each student is required to write a 2-3 page brief, typed summary of readings for 2 of the 3 class sessions. These summaries need not cover all the readings. At the end of each week’s readings, I list possible papers. Summaries are due on the day readings are assigned. Each week 1 or 2 students will be asked to brief the class on the readings. This briefing should last no more than 10 minutes, and the student should provide classmates with xeroxes of his/her typed summary.

In Section 2 of the class (6 sessions) each student is required to write 2-4 page papers that review and evaluate an assigned week’s readings, and comment on the implications of these readings for employment policies. At the end of each session’s readings, I list possible papers. Papers are due on the day readings are assigned. Students must write at least 3 and no more than 5 papers in Section 2. Each week, 1 or 2 students will be chosen to outline and critique the readings for the class. These students will distribute copies of their paper to the class. Presentations should last about 10 minutes. Other students should be prepared to amplify and critique these presentations.

In Section 3 of the class (4 sessions), students will run the class discussion. By February 20, students will be assigned one policy topic – sexual harassment, affirmative action, minimum wage and employment policies, and immigration. (In this part of the course students work together.) The class will divide up into four or five groups – one responsible for each policy session. A group will be responsible for the entire class session. In the first 30-40 minutes policy group members will brief the class about their policy. This briefing can be run as a policy debate if desired. The policy group members will then answer questions and run a guided discussion. The policy group should prepare and distribute to the class a typed outline of the major points in their briefing and a list of discussion questions.
There are also writing assignments for Section 3. Each student must write 3-5 page policy papers on at least 2 but no more than 3 of the policy topics. One of the 2 policy papers may be on the policy topic that you present in class.

By the end of the course, each student should have done two individual in-class briefings, one group in-class presentation, and should have written two 2-3 page review papers, three, four or five 2-4 page review and evaluation papers, and two or three 3-5 page policy papers for a total of nine papers.

Readings

Required readings are in the coursepack which is available from Accu-Copy. Part 1 should be ready by the beginning of class. Five books are required for the course and have been ordered from Shaman Drum:

- Ehrenreich. *Nickled and Dimed: On Not Getting by in America*
- Edin and Lein, *Making Ends Meet*
- MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*
- Wilson, *When Work Disappears*
- Newman. *No Shame in My Game*

I. Feminist Theory  (January 18)

All students should read King and Crenshaw. Students should read either MacKinnon and Rhode, or Chodorow and C. Williams. One class presenter will summarize Rhode and MacKinnon; the second will summarize Chodorow and Williams.

1. What are the major arguments about gender in feminist theory and law?


2. Intersections Between Race and Ethnicity in Feminist Theories.
I. Possible Papers

1. MacKinnon and Rhode
2. Chodorow and C. Williams
3. King and Crenshaw

II. Labor Market Models of Gender (January 25)

The Blau JEL paper provides a detailed overview of trends in women’s economic status. The Blau Focus article summarizes the longer JEL paper.

The Altonji and Blank article provides an excellent technical overview of the economics literature on women and gender. It is 116 pages long, is written for practicing economists, and covers recent research. The Blau and Ferber book is more accessible, but less detailed. Two copies of the Blau JEL and the Altonji & Blank article have been placed on reserve in the Foster Library. These readings are not required.

One presenter will summarize the required readings in II.2; the other will summarize readings in II.3. Professor Corcoran will present statistics on male/female differences in earnings employment and occupations. All students should read chapters 6 and 7 in Blau & Ferber.

1. Male/Female Differences in Occupations, Employment, and Earnings (This will be covered again as a topic in section V.)


    F. Blau and M. Ferber, The Economics of Women, Men and Work, ch. 5.


*Blau and Ferber, The Economics of Women, Men and Work, ch. 6.

T. Sowell, Markets and Minorities, Chapter 3.

*Altonji and Blank, Section 3.1, page 3164-3168.


3. Discrimination Models

Reskin and Roos, 1990, Job Queues, Gender Queues, Chapters 1-3.


*Altonji and Blank, Section 3.2-3.5, pages 3168-3191. This is very technical, but non-quantoids can benefit from the non-technical leads-ins to the more technical material. These leads-in are clear and brief.

*Blau and Ferber, The Economics of Men, Women and Work, ch. 7.

4. Other Models

A. Marxist/Patriarchal Models


B. Organizational Models


C. Sex Role Socialization and Employment

Corcoran and Courant, “Sex Role Discrimination and Screening and Women’s Work: A Reformation of Neoclassical and Structural Models of Wage Discrimination of Job Segregation,” xerox, 1989a


D. Gender, Race and Power in the Workplace


C. Williams, Gender Difference at Work (reread)


5. Feminist Critiques of Economic Models


R. Albeda and C. Tilly, Glass Ceilings and Bottomless Pits.
II. Possible Papers (Non-economists should write on 2, 3, or 4)

1. How did women’s labor force participation rates and wage rates change between 1970 and 1995? Did the male/female differences in labor force participation rates, occupations, and wages narrow or widen over time? What explanations does Blau offer to account for these changes?
2. Summarize and critique human capital models.
3. Summarize and critique discrimination models.
4. Compare and contrast human capital and discrimination models. Which does a better job of accounting for sex differences in earnings?

III. Poverty Models (February 1) Anyone who has not yet read Wilson and Mead should read and write on one of these books. If you are very familiar with Wilson and Mead, read Edin & Lein, and Clum or Newman and Durlauf and answer question III. 4. One presenter will summarize Wilson; the other will summarize Mead.

1. Institutional/Structural Models


2. Cultural/Behavioral Models


   *K. Clum. (to be assigned)


III. Possible Papers

1. Outline Wilson’s model. Evaluate how well Wilson’s model deals with women and work.
2. What assumptions do Wilson’s and Mead’s models make about the role of social capital? Outline, compare, and evaluate these arguments. How does Clum view these arguments?
3. How do Wilson’s and Mead’s models deal with women’s work? Compare and evaluate.
4. How well does Edin and Lein’s research support Wilson’s and/or Mead’s arguments?

IV. Low Wage Jobs (February 8)
What do low wage jobs look like? What do career paths of low-wage workers look like? One presenter will review Newman and deParle; one will review Edin and Edin & Lein; and one will review Ehrenreich.

*K. Edin and L. Lein. Making Ends Meet., Ch. 1,4,5,8 (reread).


IV. Possible Papers

1. Ehrenreich, Edin & Lein, and Newman all describe low wage jobs held by women. What do these jobs pay? What benefits do they provide? Do these jobs require skills? Do these jobs provide rewards-wage increases and promotions? Do these jobs pay enough to support a family? Why or why not?

2. How well do the Edin & Lein research and the Newman research, and the Ehrenreich book support/contradict Wilson’s and/or Mead’s arguments.

3. A key assumption motivating welfare reform is that individuals who work hard will eventually make a living wage. This could happen either by staying with their first employer and getting raises and promotions or by switching to new employers and jobs that are better than the first job. Do the readings assigned this week support or contradict assumptions? Discuss and evaluate.
4. Pick one of the three books assigned this week. Briefly outline the arguments in the book and the author’s conclusions. Does the evidence in the book support these conclusions? Why or why not?

V. Trends in Women’s Employment Outcomes; Trends in Earnings Inequality; Race, Ethnicity, Skills, and Women’s Outcomes (February 15) One presenter should cover required readings in V.2.; the other presenter should cover readings in V. 3. Professor Corcoran will present papers in V.1.


*B. Ehrenreich. Nickel and Dimed. (reread)


Danziger and Gottschalk, America Unequal, Chapters 6 and 7.


3. How, if at all, did wage inequalities and employment change during the mid-to-late 1990’s? How important were welfare reform and economic expansion? Did the expansion improve the wages and employment of minority and low-skilled workers and reduce race-based and skill-based economic inequalities?


V. Papers

1. How did women’s economic attainments change during the eighties and early nineties? How did patterns of change vary by race, ethnicity, and nativity? (Blau, Conrad, Corcoran & Heflin, Browne)
2. What happened to earnings and employment inequalities by education in the 1980’s and early 1990’s? Was the pattern of change in these inequalities similar for white, African-American, and Latina women (Corcoran & Heflin, Blau)? What explanations does Blau offer to account for these changes?


VI. Race, Space, Class, and Economic Restructuring (February 22-March 8)

On February 22, there will be two in-class presentations—one on Altonji & Blank and Darity & Mason and one on Holzer’s book chapters. Rucker Johnson, a graduate student in economics, will present on March 8. You can write two papers on this section.

1. Race, Ethnicity and Discrimination


2. Space, Class, Social Capital, and Culture

*K. Clum, 2001. To be assigned. (reread)

*K. Newman, No Shame in My Game. (reread)


3. Restructuring, Skills, and Employment Outcomes


*R. Johnson. To be assigned.


L. Mead, The New Politics of Poverty, Chapters 4-6 (reread).


4. Race, Class, Health, and Work

5. Contingent Work and Part-Time Work

A. What is Contingent Work?


B. Part Time Work


VI. Papers

Topic 1: Race-Based and Gender-Based Discrimination

1. What does the quantitative evidence say about discrimination? Darity & Mason; Altonji & Blank; Conrad; Holzer & Newmark.

2. How good are current economic models of discrimination? Darity & Mason; Arrow; Loury.

3. What do qualitative studies and audit studies show about discrimination? Browne & Kennelley; Kirschenman & Neckerman; Altonji & Blank; Holzer & Newmark.
Topic 2: Space, Social Capital and Culture:
2. How do culture, social capital, and access to resources affect work in the inner city? (Clum, Newman, Wilson, and Durlauf.)

Topic 3: Restructuring, Skills and Employment Outcomes
2. How are skills, work experience, and schooling related to job stability, “good jobs”, and wage growth? (Johnson).

Topic 4: Health and Work
1. How are physical and mental health issues related to work for low skilled and minority workers? Corcoran et al., Bound, et al.

Topic 5: Contingent Work and Part-Time Work
1. What do we mean by contingent work? How much is it increasing? Are the increases driven by employer or employee demand? (Blank; Segal and Sullivan.)
2. Do part-time jobs eventually lead to full-time work and/or higher wages? Discuss the evidence on this issue. (Corcoran & Loeb, Blank.)

VII. Welfare-to-Work (March 15-22)
On March 15, one presenter should cover the Blank and Corcoran et al. literature reviews and one should cover the readings on work incentives. On March 22, one presenter should cover Holzer and Pavetti’s papers in Section 5. And one should cover Corcoran et al., de Parle, and Danziger et al. (2000). You can write two papers on this section.

1. Literature Reviews: What is the status of evidence and the initial success of welfare reform? What do we know and what do we need to know?

2. Work Incentives under TANF
3. Employment and Welfare: Who gets jobs, who gets good jobs, and who remains employed on a steady basis?


R. Blank. It Takes a Nation, Chapter 2

*R. Johnson & M. Corcoran. 2001. To be assigned.


4. Earnings Growth and Welfare


*R. Johnson. 2001. (reread)


5. What will happen to welfare recipients during the coming recession?


*Smith, Noonan and Corcoran. 2001. (reread)


6. Domestic Violence and Welfare

Corcoran et. al., 2001. “Do Physical Health…” (reread)


7. Welfare Reauthorization


VII. Possible Papers
1. Before welfare reform was passed, critics argued that many single mothers would be unable to find and/or keep good jobs and that as a result childhood poverty would increase under the new welfare regime. That has not happened. What has happened to the employment of single mothers after welfare reform? Are single mothers getting jobs?…keeping jobs? What factors help or hinder employability of TANF recipients? (Corcoran, Danziger et. al.; Danziger et. al.: Corcoran: Siefert et. al.: Blank: Johnson & Corcoran)


3. A big argument in the welfare debate is whether low-skilled ex-recipients who worked regularly would see their earnings grow as they gained work experience and would eventually become economically self-sufficient. What is the state of evidence on this issue? (Corcoran & Loeb, Pavetti, Johnson, Corcoran, Danziger et. al., Blank & Schmidt)

4. How common are health problems, domestic violence, transportation problems, past discrimination, and human capital deficits among TANF recipients? Do these factors inhibit employment of recipients? Discuss. (Danziger et. al. (1999); Corcoran, Siefert et. al.; Johnson, Raphael)

5. What policy changes in the 1990’s in addition to welfare reform increased incentives for work among low-skilled women and single mothers? What is the state of knowledge about the relative contribution of the various policy changes and the economic expansion to changes in the employment and poverty rates of single mothers. (Blank; Corcoran, Danziger, et.al.; Ellwood; Smith, et. al.; Mayer and Rosenbaum).

6. We have recently entered a recession, and welfare is coming up for re-authorization. What are the likely effects of the recession on the employment, incomes, and poverty rates of single mothers and low-skilled women? What kinds of welfare and employment policies might cushion potential effects? (Hoynes; Holzer; Smith et. al.; Pavetti, JCPR).

IX. Anti-Discrimination Policy and Affirmative Action  (March 29)


Gross (ed.), *Reverse Discrimination*, see Chapter by Sandalow.


B. Bergmann, *In Defense of Affirmative Action*.


Goldman, *Justice and Reverse Discrimination*.


*Bowen and Bok, The Shape of the River*, ch. 8, 9.


X. Sexual Harassment (April 5)

*MacKinnon, Sexual Harassment of Working Women*, pp. 1-221.


*Patterson vs. MacLean Credit Union*, 1989 (racial harassment case).


XI. Minimum Wage, Wage Subsidies, and Public Employment Policies (April 12)

The book *Generating Jobs* would be a good resource for the presentation.
1. Minimum Wage


2. Wage Subsidies and Public Employment Politics

*J. Altonji and R. Blank, “Race and Gender, Section 10, Policy Issues Relating to Race and Gender in the Labor Markets”, pages 3244-3249


National Tax Journal, vol. 53:4 part 2, Special Issue on the EITC. December 2000. (Presenters may want to look at this article).


J. Heckman et al., “U.S. Education and Training Policy,”.


R. Blank, It Takes a Nation, chapter 2


S. Danziger and P. Gottschalk, America Unequal, Chapter 8. (Presenter should read this).

XII. Immigration Policy
(To be scheduled in week beginning April 1st or 8th).