Course Overview:

In 1996, Congress passed and President Clinton signed a welfare reform bill that represents a sharp break with the past. This course analyzes the origins of the new law and its likely aftermath. The course will review social science and legal thinking about welfare programs and policies, emphasizing how they are influenced by and how they affect trends in the labor market and family structure.

The first half of the course considers the development of the American welfare state from its origins to the present. It analyzes the pre-1996 evolution of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program and other social welfare programs and policies that shaped the social safety net. Particular attention will be given to understanding trends in poverty and inequality, the origins and consequences of the War on Poverty, the Great Society, and a range of successful and unsuccessful welfare reform proposals--Nixon’s Family Assistance Plan, Carter’s Program for Better Jobs and Income, Reagan’s workfare demonstration projects, and the Family Support Act of 1988. It concludes with President Clinton’s 1992 promise to “End welfare as we know it” and the transformation of that promise into the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996.

The second half of the course considers the legacy of the new law and the new program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. Particular attention is given to how the new law is being implemented and to its consequences for recipients. Are employers willing to hire welfare recipients? Are recipients finding and holding on to jobs? What are the consequences of the new law for welfare recipients, their children, the absent parents of their children? What roles are poverty researchers, policy analysts and poverty lawyers performing in this new policy environment? Particular attention will be paid to issues that are likely to be relevant when Congress reauthorizes TANF later in 2002.

Required Books:

James T. Patterson, America’s Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century (2000).

Suggested Supplemental Books, for Those Who Want More to Read:

Mary Jo Bane and David T. Ellwood, Welfare Realities (1994).

Interesting Web Sites:
Administration for Children and Families: http://www.acf.dhhs.gov
Asst. Secy. of HHS for Planning and Eval.: http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov
Census Bureau: http://www.census.gov
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: http://www.cbpp.org
Center for Law and Social Policy: http://www.clasp.org
Children’s Defense Fund: http://www.childrensdefense.org
Heritage Foundation: http://www.heritage.org
Institute for Research on Poverty: http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp
Joint Center for Poverty Research: http://www.jcpr.org
Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation: http://www.mdrc.org
Urban Institute: http://www.urban.org
Welfare Law Center: http://www.welfarelaw.org

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