CHILDREN, SCIENCE, AND POLICY – PSYC 365  
Georgetown University  
Fall 2015

Class: Monday and Wednesday, 3:30-4:45pm in White-Gravenor 204  
Professor: Anna D. Johnson  
Office: White-Gravenor 301-D  
Email: Anna.Johnson@georgetown.edu  
Office hours: Wednesdays 1:00-2:00pm, or by appointment

Required texts:  

All other readings are available on our course blog (https://blogs.commons.georgetown.edu/psyc-365-fall2015/) or via a direct link provided below.

Expectations:

1. Class participation. Students are expected to attend each class, to prepare for each class by doing the required reading, and to participate actively and insightfully in class discussion. Students are also required to post 2 discussion questions (reactions to or questions about the required readings) by 5pm on the day before each class meeting in which a new topic has been introduced/new readings have been assigned (in other words, not on days in which the topic is “continued” from the prior session, with no new readings assigned). Students will also help lead discussion on the day they submit their issue analysis and letter to the editor (details below). Students are expected to arrive for class on time, and to refrain from using cell phones during class. Laptops are not permitted. Class participation will make up 25% of your course grade.

2. Assignments. There will be three primary written assignments: an ethnography of a family (accounting for 15% of your course grade – 5% for the presentation and 10% for the written report); an issue analysis and letter to the editor (accounting for 20% of your course grade); and a final paper (30% of your course grade). As part of the final paper, you will give an oral presentation in one of the final class sessions; the presentation will account for an additional 10% of your course grade.
Assignment #1: Ethnography of a family

- Interview a working parent of a young child – the primary caregiver of a biological or adopted child between ages zero and five who also works outside their home on a full- or part-time basis, or is in a school or job-training program full-time. Present basic demographic and family information without any identifying personal information. Find out about how they juggle work/school and family (e.g., what happens if child is ill or child care is not available?), if they receive any types of public assistance and/or participate in any major child or family development programs. If the parent was working outside of the home prior to their child’s birth, you can also ask about their parental leave and return to work. Analyze your subject’s strengths, challenges, and the extent to which they are being well served by child and family policies.
- Ethnographies are due in class on the day of your in-class presentation (sign-up sheets will be available during the 2nd class meeting).

Assignment #2: Issue analysis and letter to the editor

- Students are expected to keep up with child and family policy issues being debated or discussed in local, state, or federal government, or in businesses, advocacy groups, or non-profit organizations. Using daily newspapers or weekly news magazines, you will select an article (NOT a human interest or anecdotal story) related to one of the topics we cover during Session 11 or later (sign-up sheets will be available during a class session early in the semester).
- Each student will then prepare an issue analysis (3-4 pages) and letter to the editor (200 words) on the chosen article.
- Specific instructions:
  - Find a recent article (published not before 2013) – see Professor for examples.
  - Submit the article for approval at least 1 week before the date your topic is to be discussed – it will be shared with the class, and you will help lead discussion that day.
  - In your analysis, reference a minimum of 2 course readings and 2 outside readings (peer-reviewed journal articles!)
  - Issue analysis should be 3-4 pages and must include:
    - Title and source of article
    - Copy of the article (for grading)
    - Brief summary of the article (1-2 paragraphs)
  - Issue analysis must address the following questions:
    - Does the article you selected talk about scientific evidence?
    - How well does it reflect the scientific evidence?
    - What are the implications of the article for child/family development/wellbeing?
    - Are there key points missing from the article that make it incomplete or unsatisfactory to you, or biased or inaccurate? What are they?
Consider any relevant recurring themes we discuss in class (e.g., developmental perspective; selection bias; cost-benefit analysis; prevention versus intervention)

- Each student must also prepare a 200-word letter to the editor expressing your views
  - Briefly summarize what you learned from your issue analysis
  - Identify specific actions that can/should be taken to make improvement(s) in your policy issue area

**Assignment #3: Final paper/project**

- There will be a 10-15 page final paper due during exam week.
- Students will select a peer-reviewed, scientific journal article published in an academic journal that has an incomplete (in the eyes of the student, pending my approval) or non-existent “policy implications” section
- The article will be the starting point for your final project: it should be an article that identifies a developmental or developmentally-relevant research question (does X affect Y where X is not a policy per se, and Y is something related to child development)
- The paper will have 2 parts: (1) re-crafting of the policy implications section; (2) limitations, future directions, and research recommendations of the chosen study
- I will work closely with each student in the selection of the article and the outlining of the project. It is your responsibility to email/meet with me throughout the process
- The article will be due to me in early October; an annotated bibliography will be due to me in early November. Five percent of the 30% of your final grade for which this assignment counts, will be based on these components (their timeliness and quality)
- Final presentations in the last 4 class sessions will serve as a “dry run” of your paper, on which you will receive feedback to improve the final product
- More details will be discussed in class in the coming weeks

3. The honor system. As good scholars and citizens, we are all obligated to adhere to Georgetown’s honor system concerning academic integrity. Read and understand your responsibilities at [http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/](http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/). We must and will report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty.
**Class schedule and assigned readings:**

**BACKGROUND**

9/2 1. Introduction to the course

9/7 NO CLASS – LABOR DAY

9/9 2. Children and policy – a starting point


9/14 3. Poverty – what is it, how is it measured, and how do we think about it?


*Recommended:*

**POPULAR NEWS:**


9/16 4. Why does poverty matter? The negative effects of growing up poor

Kotlowitz (entire book).


*Recommended:*
9/21 5. How does poverty matter? The negative effects of growing up poor


Continued discussion of Kotlowitz.

9/23 6. How does research get into policymaking? The guts of the policy process


*Recommended:*

9/28 7. How does research get into policymaking? Case studies

Case study 1: WIC

- Chapter 3: Components of the policy formation process (pp. 38-57)
- Chapter 4: A policy framework: Three levels of decision-making (pp. 58-71)
- WIC Case Study (pp. 85-148)

Case study 2: child care subsidies


Johnson, A.D. Public summary of “Child care subsidies: Do they impact the quality of care children experience?” (and related press release)

Testimony of Linda K. Smith, Senate Subcommittee Hearing, July 26, 2012 (Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; Subcommittee on Children and Families)
9/30  8. Ethnography presentations and discussion, I

10/5  9. Ethnography presentations and discussion, II

10/7  10. Ethnography presentations and discussion, III

PROBLEMS, POLICY SOLUTIONS, and CHILD DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

10/12  NO CLASS – COLUMBUS DAY

10/14  11. Problem: Income poverty
        Solution: Welfare reform

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
(TANF) overview (2012)
http://www.cbpp.org/files/7-22-10tanf2.pdf

selections from Jason DeParle, American Dream. [specific pages to be assigned]


policies on young children: New findings on policy experiments conducted in the early 1990s.

POPULAR NEWS:
Welfare reform today
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/long-term-thinking-for-
welfare/2015/08/02/99890ac2-3558-11e5-94ce-834ad8f5c50e_story.html

10/19  12. Income poverty and welfare reform, continued

Brooks-Gunn, J., Han, W.J., & Waldfogel, J. (2010). First year maternal employment and child
development in the first 7 years. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development,
75, 1-147.
*Abstract only.

Coley, R.L., & Lombardi, C. M. (2013). Does maternal employment following childbirth support
or inhibit low-income children’s long-term development? Child Development, 84, 178-197.

10/21  13. Problem: Work/family balance
        Solution: Policies to support the working poor – parental leave


*Read section on Parental Leave Policy only*

*Recommended:*
Zigler and Hall, Chapter 4 (only through page 66)

**POPULAR NEWS:**
Economic benefits of paid parental leave

[link to article]

**10/26 14. Other Policies to support the working poor – EITC and minimum wage**


**POPULAR NEWS:**
Just getting by:

[link to article]

[selections from Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. [specific pages to be assigned]]

*Recommended:*

**10/28 15. Problem: Poverty’s deleterious effects on very young children**

*Solution: Early intervention*


POPULAR NEWS:
Debate about efficacy of early intervention

11/2 16. Problem: unaffordable early care and education
Solution: Head Start (again, briefly); public pre-k; child care subsidies

Re-skim Deming, 2009 (from 10/20 session)


POPULAR NEWS:
Quality preschool

Preschool for All
http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/obama-unveils-1b-boost-preschools-including-55-million/story?id=27470640

11/4 17. Child care and early education, continued

11/9 18. Problem: Poor nutrition
Solution: Food and nutrition programs – WIC and SNAP

Required:


Recommended:

**POPULAR NEWS:**
Closing the “broccoli gap”

11/11 19. **Problem:** Unaffordable housing and unsafe neighborhoods  
**Solution:** Public housing and housing vouchers


*Also, think back to Kotlowitz

**Recommended:**
Sawhill, Chapter 8

**POPULAR NEWS:**
Neighborhood centers

Massive housing experiment finds those who moved to less-impoverished neighborhoods were happier

11/16 20. **Problem:** Unaffordable health care  
**Solution:** Medicaid and SCHIP/CHIP


*Child Development Perspectives*, 6, 199-205.

**RISKY DEMOGRAPHIC SUBGROUPS AND POLICIES TO SUPPORT THEM**

11/18  21.  Single mothers, “fragile families”, and marriage as a policy issue

~~CHOOSE ANY 3~~


**POPULAR NEWS:**

In defense of single motherhood

Differences in divorce rates by SES

The divorce surge is over, but the myth lives on

11/23  22.  Immigrant children

From the *Future of Children*, 21(1), 2011:

Crosnoe & Lopez-Turley (2011)

Tienda & Haskins (2011)
Karoly & Gonzalez (2011)

POPULAR NEWS:
Minorities will be the new majority

11/25 NO CLASS – Thanksgiving travel day

11/30 23. Final presentations, I

12/2 24. Final presentations, II

12/7 25. Final presentations, III

12/9 26. Final presentations, IV

Useful Websites:
Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count – http://www.kidscout.org/
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities – www.cbpp.org
Center for Law and Social Policy – www.clasp.org
Child Trends – www.childtrends.org
Foundation for Child Development – http://fcd-us.org/our-work
Future of Children – www.futureofchildren.org
And its blog – http://blogs.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/
House Ways & Means Committee, The Green Book –
Institute for Research on Poverty – www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp
MDRC (welfare experiments) – www.mdrc.org
National Center for Children in Poverty – www.nccp.org
National Poverty Center (University of Michigan) – www.npc.umich.edu
New York Times Economix blog – http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com (search “children” and/or “poverty”; entries by Jason DeParle and Nancy Folbre may be particularly relevant)
Urban Institute – www.urban.org
U.S. Census Bureau (population info and poverty statistics) – www.census.gov