Poverty In Your Community

Course Syllabus

Course Overview

This 4-week facilitated online course guides VISTAs through a series of activities and reflections to deepen their understanding of poverty in the community in which they serve. During the course you will consider how the experiences of community members are impacted by intersections of race, gender, and other factors. You will get the opportunity to practice using data mapping tools to look at data trends in your community and will also practice interviewing and listening to different community voices.

Prerequisites

Students must be officially sworn-in as VISTA members and have completed a Virtual Member Orientation.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course you will be able to:
- Define causes and types of poverty
- Reflect on personal experiences and beliefs regarding poverty
- Recognize common misconceptions regarding causes of poverty and the experiences of people in poverty
- Collect and interpret quantitative and qualitative data to create a more comprehensive profile of the community in which you serve
- Identify factors shaping current experiences of poverty for members of the community in which you serve
- Analyze how local factors currently shaping poverty in your community fit within national and historical trends
- Apply what you learn about poverty in your community when engaging with community members and carrying out VAD activities

Course Features

Course activities: The course has 4 weeks of content. In the course, you will find various types of graded activities, including:

- *Quizzes:* There are several open-book quizzes to assess your comprehension of specific course readings and materials.

- **Reflections:** In several weeks there are short answer reflection questions where you will be asked to draw from course content and personal observations to respond.
- **Assignments:** Each week there is a central assignment that asks you to apply the course materials and readings to your community and VISTA project.
- **Forum Questions**: Each week there is a forum question posed to the class that you will be asked to respond to.

Course-at-a-Glance

Week 1: How Do We Think About Poverty?
Readings:
- Course Syllabus
- Course Activity Checklist
- Models and Types of Poverty (EDNW)
  - Optional:
    - [The State of Poverty and Opportunity In the United States (US Partnership for Mobility, pgs. 6-9)](#)
    - [The Changing Geography of US Poverty (Brookings Institute Testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee, February 15, 2017)](#)

Activities:
- Week One Introduction (Video)
- Models and Types of Poverty (Quiz)
- Narratives About Poverty: Myths and Realities (Tutorial)
- 13 Lessons About Poverty (Forum Post)

Assignments:
- Poverty In Your Community Worksheet

Week 2: How Can Data Deepen Our Understanding Of Poverty?
Readings:
- [Measuring America: How the U.S. Census Bureau Measures Poverty (US Census Bureau)](#)
- Evaluating the Usefulness of Data Sources Guide (EDNW)
- Optional:
  - [State of the Union 2018 Report on Poverty and Inequality - Gender (Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality)](#)
  - [Five Evils: Multidimensional Poverty and Race in America (Brookings Institute)](#)

Activities:
- Week Two Introduction (Video)
- Measuring Factors That Shape Poverty (Tutorial)
- Social Explorer Practice (Quiz)
- Share A Map (Forum Post)

Assignments:
- Mapping Regional Data Worksheet

Week 3: How Can the Perspective of Community Members Deepen Our Understanding of Poverty?

Reading:
- Listening to Your Community Interview Guide (EDNW)

Activities:
- Week Three Introduction (Video)
- Community Stories (The Line Video Clip - 22min)
- Stories of Lived Experiences (Reflection)
- Community Voices Reflection (Forum Post)
- Optional (Video):
  - "The Story We Tell About Poverty Isn't True" TED Talk, Mia Birdsong, 2015
  - Stories and videos from the initiative: Chasing the Dream

Assignments:
- Listening to Community Voices Worksheet

Week 4: How Can Our Understanding of Poverty Shape Our Work in the Community?

Activities:
- Week Four Introduction (Video)
- Strategies for Changing the Narrative (Forum Post)
- Applying What You've Learned (Reflection)

Reading:
- Strategies for Changing the Narrative About Poverty (EDNW)

Assignments:
- Working In The Community Worksheet

Course Completion and Grading Criteria

This course is offered on a pass/fail basis. Successful participation and completion of this course will be assessed in the following ways:
- Quizzes/ Reflections (3 total) – 8 points each (24% of total grade)
- Assignments (4 total) - 15 points each (60% of total grade)
- Forums (4 total) - 2 points each (8% of total grade)
- Final Reflection - 8 points (8% of total grade) ***Completion Required to Pass***

A total of 100 points are available in this course. To pass this course, you must earn a minimum of 70 points (or 70%) AND complete the final reflection. The *Course Activity Checklist* details the individual point values and due dates for all activities.

Course Expectations

As a participant, you are expected to:
- Read all required articles and other materials.
- Complete and submit all activities by the due dates.
- Contact the facilitator if you have questions about the materials or assignments that keep you from completing them.

You can expect the course facilitator to:
- Read all your assignments and questions carefully and thoughtfully and respond as promptly as possible.
- Answer any specific questions within 48 hours.

Communication
There are two ways to interact with your facilitator:
- Via the forums
- Via the messaging system

Please use the messaging system to contact your facilitator, instead of personal email, Facebook, or other forms of messaging.

Course Rules & Guidelines

Academic honesty and integrity: All work submitted in this course must be your own. All sources used in your work must be properly acknowledged and documented. Violations of academic honesty will be taken seriously and may result in a failing grade in the course.

Course conduct: In the interest of promoting a positive learning environment, *s*tudents are expected to observe the following guidelines for personal conduct:
- Share only items and comments that are pertinent to the discussion topic.
- Be respectful of diverse opinions and experiences; disagree respectfully.

- Use discretion when sharing experiences and names of individuals directly from your VISTA assignment.

Participation: Students who enroll in the VISTA Poverty In Your Community online course are expected to participate actively and may be dropped for failure to log into the course within the first 5 days of the first day of class. If a student is added after the course has begun, they must login with 48 hours or be dropped from the course.

Please notify your facilitator if you expect to be out of town for an extended period (5 days or more).

Assignment due dates: Weekly activities are due on Sunday at 11:00 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time) See the Course Activity Checklist under Courses Resources on the home page for a list of assignments and corresponding dues dates.

Policy for late work: Students are responsible for locating and completing all the activities in the course. Active participation is also expected on a weekly basis. See the *Course Activity Checklist* for activity due dates. Activities will be due every Sunday night. You must give prior notice and receive permission from the facilitator in order to turn in work past the due date, up to 10 days. Every day an activity is late, without prior notice and permission, will result in the loss of 1 point (for example, if your activity is 3 days late, you will lose 3 points). After 10 days, you will automatically receive a score of 0.

Minimum Technical Requirements

- Access to an Internet connection (dial-up/56k minimum, cable modem preferred)
- Java, JavaScript enabled browser (IE9 or better, Chrome, or other equivalent)
- Although not required, a PDF reader and word processing may be necessary for reading/completing specific course components. If you don't have access to Microsoft Office; we recommend the open-source equivalent, Apache Open Office.

Accessibility

The VISTA Campus is accessible to Section 508 and WCAG Level II guidelines. This includes accessible PDF, MS Word, and MS Excel documents. Alternative text tags have also been added to website images as needed, as well as alternate content provided for multimedia files.

Course References List

The following resources were consulted, excerpted, adapted or reprinted in full for course readings and resources.

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Ellwood, D., Patel, N.G. (January 2018). Restoring the American Dream: What Would It Take
to Dramatically Increase Mobility from Poverty?. *US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty*.
Retrieved from: https://www.mobilitypartnership.org/restoring-american-dream

Kneebone, E. (2017). The changing geography of US poverty. *The Brookings Institute
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Subcommittee on Human Resources, February 15, 2017*. Retrieved from:
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Education Northwest, (2018) Models and Types of Poverty. Unpublished manuscript, *Education
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Reeves, R.V., Rodrigue, E., and Kneebone, E., (2016). Five Evils: Multidimensional Poverty
and Race in America. *Economic Studies at Brookings Report*. Retrieved from:
https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ReevesKneeboneRodrigue_MultidimensionalPoverty_FullPaper.pdf

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https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Pathways_SOTU_2018.pdf

United States Census Bureau (2017). Measuring America: How the U.S. Census Bureau Measures
Poverty". *US Department of Commerce.* Retrieved from:
https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2017/demo/poverty_measure-how.html