

# 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. VISTAs will consider how the experiences of community members are impacted by intersections of race, gender, and other factors. Participants will practice using data mapping tools to look at data trends in their community and will also practice interviewing and listening to different community voices.

### Prerequisites

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Students must be officially sworn-in as VISTA members and have completed Virtual Member Orientation activities including the Community Profile report and the 13 Lessons on Poverty activity.

### Course Objectives

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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

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**This course features:**

- **Quizzes (2):** These open-book quizzes will assess comprehension of the course readings and tools.
- **Reflection Assignment (1):** This activity asks participants to reflect on their reactions to course material.
- **Weekly Portfolio Assignments (4):** These graded assignments work towards the creation of a larger community portfolio to document course learning.
- **Culminating Portfolio Assignment (1):** This assignment asks participants to compile highlights from their weekly portfolio assignments into a culminating portfolio.

## Course-at-a-Glance

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### Week 1: How We Think About Poverty

#### Readings:

- 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:

- Instructor introduction (video)
- Models and Types of Poverty (quiz)
- Narratives About Poverty: Myths and Realities (tutorial)
- Reflecting on Your Personal Experiences (optional reflection)

#### Assignments:

- Perspectives on Poverty: Community Portfolio Assignment #1

### Week 2: How Can Data Deepen Our Understanding of Poverty in the Communities in which We Serve?

#### Readings:

- Evaluating the Usefulness of Data Sources Guide (EDNW)
- [Measuring America: How the U.S. Census Bureau Measures Poverty \(US Census Bureau\)](#)
  - 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:

- Instructor introduction (video)
- Measuring Factors That Shape Poverty (tutorial)
- Social Explorer Practice (quiz)

#### Assignments:

- Mapping Regional Data: Community Portfolio Assignment #2

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

#### Reading:

- Listening to Your Community Interview Guide (EDNW)

#### Activities:

- Instructor introduction (video)
- Community Stories ([The Line Video](#) Clip - 22min)
  - Optional:
    - [“The Story We Tell About Poverty Isn’t True” TED Talk, Mia Birdsong, 2015](#)
    - Stories and videos from the initiative: [Chasing the Dream](#)

#### Assignments:

- Community Stories Reflection
- Listening to Community Voices: Community Portfolio Assignment #3

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

#### Activities:

- Instructor Video

#### Reading:

- Strategies for Changing the Narrative About Poverty (EDNW)

#### Assignments:

- Working in the Community: Community Portfolio Assignment #4
- Compiled Community Portfolio

## **Course Completion and Grading Criteria**

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This course is offered on a pass/fail basis. Successful completion of this course will be assessed based on receiving: 1) completing or viewing all the modules in the course and 2) receiving at least a 70% on each of the following graded assignments:

- Weekly Portfolio Assignments (4)
- Reflection assignment (1)
- Final Community Portfolio Assignment (1)

To pass this course, you must earn a minimum of a 70% on EACH of the graded assignments for the course. The *Course Activity Checklist* details the individual point values for each assignment and due dates for all activities. Each graded assignment will include a scoring rubric outlining how the written assignments will be assessed.

## Course Expectations

As a participant, you are expected to:

- Read all required articles and other materials. Optional readings are not required
- 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:

1. Via the forums
2. 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

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**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, students 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 VISTA online courses 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 within 48 hours or be dropped from the course.

Please notify your facilitator if you expect to be out of town for an extended period of time (7 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 due 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 5 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 5 days, you will automatically receive a score of 0.

## Minimum Technical Requirements

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- Access to an Internet connection (dial-up/56k minimum, cable modem preferred.)
- Java, JavaScript enabled browser such as:
  - Google Chrome 58 and newer
  - Firefox 52 and newer
  - Safari 9 and 10
  - Internet Explorer 11
  - Edge 14 and newer
  - Opera 44 and newer
- A PDF reader
- A computer or tablet with 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](#). Please talk to your course facilitator if you are not able to open an RTF file (rich text file) with word processing and they can provide you with an alternative online option.

## Course Readings & Materials

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- Birdsong, M. (2015). The Story We Tell About Poverty Isn't True. *TED*. Lecture. Retrieved from: [https://www.ted.com/talks/mia\\_birdsong\\_the\\_story\\_we\\_tell\\_about\\_poverty\\_isn\\_t\\_true?utm\\_campaign=tedsread&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/mia_birdsong_the_story_we_tell_about_poverty_isn_t_true?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)
- Chasing the Dream: Poverty and Opportunity in America. *WNET*. Stories and films retrieved from: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/chasing-the-dream/all-stories/>
- 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 Metropolitan Policy Program. Testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee, Subcommittee on Human Resources, February 15, 2017*. Retrieved from: <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-changing-geography-of-us-poverty/>
- Education Northwest, (2018). Evaluating the Usefulness of Data Sources Guide. Unpublished manuscript, *Education Northwest*, Portland Oregon.
- Education Northwest, (2018). Listening to Your Community Interview Guide. Unpublished manuscript, *Education Northwest*, Portland Oregon.
- Education Northwest, (2018) Models and Types of Poverty. Unpublished manuscript, *Education Northwest*, Portland Oregon.
- Education Northwest, (2018). Strategies for Changing the Narrative. Unpublished manuscript, *Education Northwest*, Portland Oregon.
- 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](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ReevesKneeboneRodrigue_MultidimensionalPoverty_FullPaper.pdf)
- Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, (2018). State of the Union: The Poverty and Inequality Report. Special Issue, *Pathways Magazine*. Retrieved from: [https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Pathways\\_SOTU\\_2018.pdf](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](https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2017/demo/poverty_measure-how.html)