

Please watch PBS-Blackside films documentary “In This Affluent Society” [Part 1 \(10 minutes\)](#), [Part 2 \(12 mins\)](#), [Part 3 \(20 mins\)](#), [Part 4 \(10 minutes\)](#). If you have trouble viewing these videos, let me know, we have a DVD copy which can be made available in library EIC. Thanks to Fordham’s ODS, we now have 5 youtube videos with captions (see below for a list of urls). [Part 1 of 5](#), [Part 2 of 5](#), [Part 3 of 5](#), [Part 4 of 5](#), [Part 5 of 5](#). Many thanks to Carol Mooney at Fordham ODS for uploading and providing captions, a lot of work (turn them on, they help). Perhaps also read this brief summary and [cast](#) list. Read the questions below before you watch it. Depending on your last name, take notes so you can answer one of questions 3 to 6. After our class discussion everyone should know the answer all the questions

U.S. Poverty Trends and Measures: The official U.S. poverty rate (aka the OPM) fell from about 33% in 1945 to 22% in 1959 and to about 11% in 1971. Then poverty rose through the difficult 1980s peaking at almost 15% in 1991 but during the 1990s boom it fell back to 11% in 2001. The United States Census Bureau is gradually shifting from a system of a single poverty measure famously defined by Mollie Orshansky in 1965 to two poverty measures. The new supplemental poverty measures (SPM) adjusts the U.S. poverty rate in by adding in many in-kind or noncash benefits and adjusting the poverty line to reflect higher living costs in cities like New York and for increases in the cost of living over time, as recommended by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). The term “supplemental” refers to fact that this new poverty measure is not designed to replace the official poverty measure (OPM) developed by a native New Yorker, immigrant from Ukraine.

Readings: David Wessel (2001) [Measuring Poverty in the U.S](#) Wall Street Journal (pre- semi-official SPM, but still helpful). Ellwood, David (1990) Poor Support, [Chapter 2 pages 81 to 86](#), pre vs. post-transfer poverty.

References: Short, K. (2011) [The Research Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2010](#) (presentation) at the Brookings/Census Bureau Meeting On Improved Poverty Measurement, November 7th 2011.

1. **Poverty during the great recession:** The surge in unemployment associated with the great recession presented a major challenge to U.S. poverty programs. Post welfare reform, benefits were increasing tied to work, for example the EITC, TANF (transitional assistance to needy families) and SNAP (aka food stamps). A) According the NY Times own estimates ([November 4th 2011](#)) how much did post-transfer poverty increase during at the height of the great recession (which started in 2008)? As an example the NY Times cites the case of divorced mother of two Angelique Melton who lost her \$40k a year construction management job in Charlotte, NC: *“Struggling to pay the rent and keep the family adequately fed, she took the only job she could find: a part-time position at Wal-Mart that paid less than half her former salary. With an annual income of about \$7,500 — well below the poverty line of \$17,400 for a family of three — Ms. Melton was officially poor.”* Why does the Times argue that unofficially she was not poor? Did the safety net work in this case? b) Hopefully Ms. Melton has found a full time job by now, why does she have stronger incentive to do so than before the 1996 welfare reform? c) In contrast [John William Springs](#) is official not poor (thanks to cash benefits not conditional on income) but might be considered poor using the SPM. Explain. (hint: MOOP). How does the case of Mr. Springs represent a victory of President Johnson’s war on poverty, as broadly defined by Christopher Jencks in this week’s New York Review of books (why the “broadly defined” qualification?).

2. Sargent Shriver and Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Sargent Shriver declared “unconditional war” on poverty in 1964 (fifty years ago). Their self-stated goal was to eliminate severe poverty characterized by poor nutrition and substandard housing (see Kennedy’s campaign speech) and “very bad” education by the year 2000. (a) What were the main programs Kennedy (to help coal miners) and Johnson’s were willing to use to reduce poverty (recall what the CEA report says about welfare)? B) In the late 1960s, mainly after Johnson left office, the U.S. congress passed food stamps, WIC, public housing and Medicaid programs and welfare participation rates rose sharply during the 1980s, why? (see the war on [poverty lecture notes](#)) (b) Nearly a million Americans a year escaped poverty and entered the middle class during the 1960s, why? *From 1945 to 1960 poverty fell from about 33% to 22%, assuming a U.S. population of about 180 million does the PBS film over or understate the annual fall in the U.S. poor population during this period?.* C) during this period which group staged a “poverty reversal” (recall that a great poverty reversal is from 80-90% poverty to 10-20%; a regular “poverty reversal” is from 70-80% to 20-30%, still high but much better). Relate this poverty reversal to reduced social exclusion (*American Dilemma*) but not a complete escape from poverty (see *More than Race*)

3. **(A-C)** In the 1950s, as in the 1990s, globalization (trade & technical change) had negative impacts on some industries and regions. a) In the 1950s the U.S. began importing cheap oil from the Middle East (Iran). How cheap oil imports affect workers in Appalachia? b) Senator Kennedy won the 1960 West Virginia primary partly because he made West Virginia poverty and unemployment a political issue. Once elected, what did President Kennedy do to help West Virginia's poor? Did it work? How did most residents of Appalachia end up escaping poverty?
4. **(D-L)** Hamish Sinclair, radio reporter and community organizer interviewed in the PBS film "In this affluent Society" describes 1950s Appalachia as a developing country within the U.S. a) What in particular shocked Hamish and Senator Kennedy about the poor in Appalachia? Do we still have this sort of poverty in the United States today? What type of jobs did the poor in Kentucky and Mississippi typically have? One mother says she had to leave Kentucky so her "six boys could attend school and get skills to earn a living" so she packed up her "nine kids" and headed to Chicago. What 1950s American reality does her statement reflect? c) Did any government agency help her family leave Appalachia? What sort of reception did "hillbilly" families get in Chicago? Why do governments generally discourage people from moving long distances even when that may be the best road out of poverty?
5. **(M-P)** President Kennedy's, later to become President Johnson's "war on poverty" was triggered by a book (*The Other America*) and violence that turned regions of the U.S. into a "war zone." a) What groups triggered this early 1960s wave of shootings, bombings and arson? What key issue precipitated this violence? Has this problem been solved today for the poor or non-poor? b) The U.S. government spent hundreds of millions trying to revive Appalachia's economy. Did this strategy work? How did most Appalachia residents eventually escape poverty? How might tax dollars spent on Appalachian development programs been put to better use? c) What leads governments to boost local "development" spending even in areas where economic prospects are bleak?
6. **(Q-Z)** The film "In this Affluent Society" mentions two major U.S. post-WWII South to North migrations-- each involving over a million people. a) Which groups moved into particular Chicago ghettos? What were these neighborhoods called? Why did so many migrants go to Chicago? What happened in Chicago (and in Detroit, NY, Newark and Philadelphia) during late 1950s the early 1960s? b) Many of the more affluent looking people in the film in fact returned to the South their parents fled in the 1950s. Why? What changed since their parents left—economically and politically? c) Why did the South grow faster than the North during the 1960s and 1970s? Where are many of those same auto and other factory (textiles) jobs going now? This exodus of industry due to globalization accelerated in the 1990s, did U.S. poverty and unemployment rise or fall during this period? Why are light manufacturing jobs so important to poor workers leaving rural areas, here or in China?

Part 1 of 5 clips from "In this Affluent Society" the no longer available PBS documentary produced by the late Henry Hampton (Blackside films), made available here with captions in an effort to make it available to a wider audience. Unlike Blackside's "Eyes on the Prize" this film series on America's 1960s "War on poverty" is no longer available on in any format. For more information on this three part series, please see Note that this 50 minute documentary is the first of five episodes (one is called "City of Promise" which is? Right Newark, NJ, Cory Booker thinks it is and was...). Other episodes are available for EC material (Headstart and the CDGM in Mississippi is a classic). The only episode we watch as a class is "In this Affluent Society" so please do watch it when you have time. In the past, we watched the whole film in class, but snow days you will have to watch these mainly on your own. Let me know if you run into any technical difficulties. These are not HD by any means, but the sound track is interesting (PBS can longer broadcast or sell copies of these documentaries because the music rights are too expensive). Other episodes are available for EC material (Headstart and the CDGM in Mississippi is a classic). The only episode we watch as a class is "In this Affluent Society" so please do watch it when you have time. Read the questions below before you watch it. Depending on your last name, take notes so you can answer one of questions 3 to 6, though eventually we all should be able to answer all the questions (after we discuss them in class). In the past, we watched the whole film in class, but given our small screen and other short films you will have to watch these mainly on your own. Let me know if you run into any technical difficulties. These are not HD by any means, but keep in mind that the reason PBS can longer air these documentaries is that the music rights are too expensive. Enjoy.

In this Affluent Society, youtube version (most with captions, many thanks for Fordham's ODS).

- *Part 1 of 5: <http://youtu.be/FDxK95zhiJ0>
 - *Part 2 of 5: <http://youtu.be/6QBepOZSD0U>
 - Part 3 of 5: <http://youtu.be/11wvUlt39B0>
 - *Part 4 of 5: <http://youtu.be/B89a4fPd1E0>
 - Part 5 of 5: <http://youtu.be/i5sfpTUb>
- <http://class.povertylectures.com/WaronPovertyFilmNotes.pdf>

Kennedy speech on poverty and deprivation in the United States (3-5 minutes)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OBepOZSD0U>

Part 1 The war on poverty is launched,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDxK95zhiJ0>

Part 2 “Automation did it...” <http://youtu.be/6OBepOZSD0U>

1. The new supplemental poverty measures (SPM) adjusts U.S. poverty the U.S. poverty rate in by adding in many in-kind or cash benefits and adjusting the poverty line to reflect higher living costs in cities like New York and for increases in the cost of living over time, as recommended by the National Academy of sciences. The term “supplemental” refers to fact that this new poverty measure is not designed to replace the official poverty measure developed by Molly Orshansky (native New Yorker, immigrant from Ukraine). A) 2010 Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) HHS Report. a) Which demographic group poverty rate increases and which decreases when we count cash and noncash, before tax and after tax incomes? (see Figure 1). Which programs reduce poverty the most? (see Figure 3A) (b) Briefly, discuss the pros and cons of the official poverty measure, vs. the new SPM. Do we need both measures? See [WSJ article by D. Wessel](#) and Ellwood [Chapt 2, pp. 82-87](#). C) From 2009 to 2010 which groups saw a large and significant increase in poverty, which groups did not? (look for a positive number with a star * in the last column of Table 5, especially children and single parent households). Why did poverty rates for children under 18 rise sharply in the 1980s (b) How much has official poverty risen during recent “great recession”— see the [November 4th, 2011](#) prequel and the actual [release article on November 8th](#) which was a disappointment since they only [reported the SPM for 2009 and 2010](#)—see [K. Short’s presentation](#), note that the new [experimental measure raises the poverty line](#), see page 4)