

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.” Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations

University of La Verne
HONR 313 (CRN 2248)

Universal Basic Income: Visions and Policies

Spring 2018

Instructor: Soomi Lee, PhD

Office: CBPM 120

Office hours: Mondays 2:30 PM-3:30 PM and Tuesdays 4:50 PM -5:30 PM.

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Course Meetings

Mondays 3:30 PM – 6:40 PM

Location: Wilson Library 248

Course Description

Universal Basic Income (UBI, or Basic Income hereafter) is a modest amount of money paid unconditionally to individuals on a regular basis. It has gained much media attention in recent years, with Silicon Valley CEOs arguing UBI is "inevitable" due to automation and the jobless economy. Pilot programs have sprung up in Africa, Europe, Asia, and North and South America. And for some people, UBI is an inspiration to totally re-imagine how societies could function in the future. In this course, we will delve into the long history of UBI, going back to the second Magna Carta in 1219, engage in philosophical debates (liberalism, republicanism, communism, libertarianism, etc.) and examine social, political, and policy issues related to the future of work, gender equality, taxation and the redistribution of wealth. Students in political science, philosophy, public policy and sociology will find the class especially relevant to their fields, but this new course is interdisciplinary and open to students in all majors.

Course Objectives

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the idea of UBI and compare UBI with similar alternatives;
2. Describe the philosophy behind UBI in relation to justice and freedom;
3. Demonstrate understanding of the history of UBI around the globe and in the U.S.;
4. Assess the pros and cons of the modern welfare system and evaluate the best way to alleviate poverty and deprivation;
5. Identify challenges in the labor market with income and employment insecurity;
6. Develop a personal vision for the future society to ensure justice and freedom.

Textbook and Software Access Requirement

- Standing, Guy. 2017. *Basic Income: A Guide for the Open-minded*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- And other weekly assignments on Blackboard.

Course Requirements

1. A 500-word essay after watching a film (10%)
3. In-class presentation (30%)
2. Participation (20%)
4. Course project (40%)

1. Essay (10% of the course grade)

You will write a 500-word essay after watching a film. Aside from the story itself, the film presents important social issues to its audience. For instance, human dignity and friendship/inter-dependence are important social issues that can be appreciated in the film, despite knowing much about them. In writing the essay, make sure to communicate your personal viewpoint and learning as you relate to the film and the ideas and values in it. The essay will make a connection between the film and your own experience, and the meaning of the film to you.

Your first task is to tell me what position, a set of beliefs or values, you think the film tries to convey. The second task is to reflect on the point, positions, and values you have ascribed to the film. Think about whether the position of the film is aligned with your own experience and values. The third task is to describe the outcome of your thought process for the second task. What meanings and values does the film try to promote? What is your personal position relative to the film?

- Deadline: Feb. 20, 2018
- Submission: MS Word file via Blackboard.
- Format: Times New Roman font, size 12, one-inch margins, double-spaced.
- Be concise. Edit and proofread thoroughly.

2. In-class presentation (30% of the course grade)

You must present the reading material for the assigned weeks at least twice throughout the course. Form a group of two, and work together to master the topic that you two choose to present in the classroom (see Weekly Topics and Readings). The team will read the reading materials carefully, prepare a 30-minute presentation for the class, given during the assigned week. The grade will be based on the team's depth of understanding of the given subject, presentation style, and effort on additional research.

Presenters must prepare discussion questions and lead the discussion after their presentation. Instead of reproducing the Blackboard postings in their slides, presenters should sort out identify common questions, suggested discussion topics, and thoughts in general to "lead" class discussions. Give good thoughts to your classmate's responses to readings and find their underlying assumptions.

Presentation slides should be uploaded to Blackboard a day before the class (by Sunday 3 PM).

3. Participation (20% of the course grade)

[In-class participation] This course is discussion-intensive. Everyone is expected to participate actively in class discussions. Your grade for participation will not only reflect how often you contributed to our class discussions, but the degree to which your contributions were constructive and generative of further response(s) from your fellow classmates. Combative posturing, defamatory remarks, or statements that are off-topic work to silence others and stunt dialogue and will, therefore, negatively impact your participation grade.

[Weekly responses to readings (online participation)] While presenters prepare their presentations each week, non-presenters must read all of the assigned materials and respond to them. Non-presenters are required to post questions and discussion topics to the class on Blackboard one day before class (by Sunday 3 PM). The questions and discussion topics will be evaluated not based on the quantity, but on the quality. Provide a context why you suggested your discussion topics, and always refer to the readings.

4. Course project (40% of the course grade)

The course project requires two separate but related subprojects.

- (1) Students must form a group of three by the second week of the course. The members of the group must have different majors. Groups will e-mail a list of their members and member bios by Feb. 12 to the instructor.
- (2) Groups will develop their own related course project. Examples include: video interviewing the homeless or city managers/mayors, organizing a gathering

- and giving a talk on basic income in non-profit organizations or in city council meetings, composing a song, or writing a play. The final project can take any form, but must be approved by the instructor. Groups will e-mail a proposal to the instructor by March 4. The proposal must include motivations, goals, plans, and a timeline of successful completion for the project.
- (3) At the end of the semester, groups will present their own project in class (on May 21).
 - (4) Students will submit **two** items to the instructor by May 28: final group project (videos, papers, etc.) and a 3-page individual reflection essay on the course and UBI.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is expected and necessary to learn the material and to succeed in this class. Absence will negatively affect your learning and course grade. Absence without notice in advance will result in a grade penalty. The instructor reserves the right to treat two absences as a withdrawal from the course.

Grading Policy

A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69.

Letter Grade	Grade Point	Description
A	4.0	Clearly stands out as having excellent performance. Demonstrates sharp insight of the material; initiates thoughtful questions. Sees many sides to an issue. Articulates well and writes logically and clearly. Integrates ideas previously learned from this and other disciplines; anticipates next steps in the progression of ideas.
B	3.0	Demonstrates a satisfactory comprehension of the subject matter. Accomplishes the minimum requirements, and communicates orally and in writing at an acceptable level for a college student. Has a general understanding of all basic concepts.
C	2.0	Completes course assignments and requirements with minimally acceptable proficiency in written and oral communication.
D	1.0	Quality and quantity of work in and out of class is below average and barely acceptable.
F	0.0	Quality and quantity of work in and out of class are unacceptable.

University Policy on Academic Honesty (from the University Catalog)

“Academic Honesty: Each student is responsible for performing academic tasks in such a way that honesty is not in question. Unless an exception is specifically defined by an instructor, students are expected to maintain the following standards of integrity:

- a. All tests, term papers, oral and written assignments, recitations, and all other academic efforts are to be the work of the student presenting the material.
- b. Any use of wording, ideas, or findings of other persons, writers, or researchers requires the explicit citation of the source; use of the exact wording requires a “quotation” format.
- c. Deliberately supplying material to a student for purposes of plagiarism is also culpable.”

Weekly Topics & Readings

* indicates required readings

Week 1 (Feb. 5): Course Overview

Introduction to Universal Basic Income: definition and history.

Readings: *Standing Ch.1.

Philippe Van Parijs. 2000. [A Basic Income for All](#). *Boston Review*. 10/1/2000.

Week 2 (Feb. 12): Movie Screening. I, Daniel Blake (2016)

Assignment this week: a short essay. **Due. Feb. 20.**

Week 3 (Feb. 19): Presidents' Day. No class meeting.

Week 4 (Feb. 26): Ethnical Justification I. Social Justice

Readings: *Standing Ch.2.

*Almaz Zelleke. 2005. Distributive Justice and the Argument for an Unconditional Basic Income. *Journal of Socio-Economics* 34(1): 3-15.

Henry George. 1879. *Progress and Poverty*. Excerpts.

Thomas Paine. *Agrarian Justice*. Excerpts.

Week 5 (March 5): Ethical Justification II. Freedom

Readings: *Standing Ch.3.

*Philippe Van Parijs. 1991. [Why Surfers Should Be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income?](#) *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 20(2): 101-31.

*Erich Fromm. 1966. [The Psychological Aspects of the Guaranteed Income](#). In R. Theobald, *The Guaranteed Income*. New York: Doubleday & Co.

Week 6 (March 12): Poverty, Inequality, and Insecurity

Poverty, poverty trap, current status of poverty in the U.S., history of welfare programs in the U.S., types of welfare programs, and the welfare cliff.

Readings: *Standing Ch.4.

*Rutger Bregman. 2014. Nixon's Basic Income Plan. *Utopia for Realists*. Ch.4.

*James Tobin. [The Case for an Income Guarantee](#). *Public Interest*.

US Census. 2017. [Income and Poverty in the United States: 2016](#).

The Economist. 2006. [From Welfare to Workfare](#). 6/27/2006.

The Economist. 2010. [Cutting out the Middle Men](#). 11/4/2010.

Spring Break (March 19): No class meeting

Week 7 (March 26): Economic Justification of UBI

Insecurity of income and unemployment, basics of monetary and fiscal policies

Readings: *Standing Ch.5.

*Mark Walker. 2014. [BIG and Technological Unemployment: Chicken Little Versus the Economists](#). *Journal of Evolution & Technology* 24(1): 5-25.

*Guy Standing. 2011. The Precariat. In *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. Ch.1. Bloombury Academic.

Videos on macroeconomics by the Federal Reserve.

- [What is the difference between monetary policy and fiscal policy, and how are they related?](#)
- [What is inflation and how does the Federal Reserve evaluate changes in the rate of inflation?](#)
- [What were the Federal Reserve's large-scale asset purchases?](#)

*Video on Elon Musk on UBI. [Available here](#).

Week 8 (April 2): Funding UBI

How much would it cost to implement a UBI? (*Depending on the design!)

Sovereign wealth funds and the Alaska model (and Finland)

US Tax system with the fiscal federalism

Readings: *Standing Ch.7.

*Peter Barns. 2014. The Alaska Model. In *With Liberty and Dividends for All*. Ch.6.

*Karl Widerquist. 2017. [The Cost of Basic Income: Back-of-the-Envelope Calculations](#). *Basic Income Studies*.

*Eamon Murphy and Seán Ward. [Costing a Basic Income for Ireland](#). In *Basic Income*. Social Justice Ireland.

World Economic Forum. 2017. [What is a Sovereign Wealth Fund?](#)

Week 9 (April 9): Implications for Work

Guest speaker (via Skype): Paolo Fernandez Del Castillo from Commonomia. <http://www.commonomia.org>

Our guest speaker will give a 30-minute talk on his project on developing digital currency platform for local UBI implementations, followed by Q&As.

Readings: *Standing Ch.8.

*Alma Zelleke. 2008. [Institutionalizing the Universal Caretaker Through a Basic Income?](#) *Basic Income Studies* 3(3).

*Bertrand Russell. 1932. [In Praise of Idleness](#). Harper Magazine.

Week 10 (April 16): Politics and Civic Engagement

Guest speaker: Larry Cohen. Basic income activist and the founder of Buildthefloor.org.

Readings: *Standing Ch.12.

*Jurgen De Wispelaere and José Antonio Noguera. 2012. [On the Political Feasibility of Universal Basic Income: An Analytic Framework](#). In: Caputo R.K. (eds) *Basic Income Guarantee and Politics. Exploring the Basic Income Guarantee*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Week 11 (April 23): Objections to Basic Income

Readings: *Standing Ch.6.

*Alyssa Battistoni. 2017. [The False Promise of Universal Basic Income](#). *Dissent*.

*Eduard Porter. 2016. [A Universal Basic Income is a Poor Tool to Fight Poverty](#). *New York Times*. 6/1/2016.

Week 12 (April 30): Alternatives

Readings: *Standing Ch.9.

*Milton Friedman. 1967. [The Case for the Negative Income Tax](#). *National Review*.

*Video [Interview of Milton Friedman on the Negative Income Tax](#).

*Anthony B. Atkinson. 1996. The Case for a Participation Income. *Political Quarterly* 67(1): 67-70.

*David M. Smick. 2018. [America Needs Federal “Baby Bonds.”](#) *The Wall Street Journal*. April 15, 2018.

*Gi-seong Kim. 2017. [“Seongnam’s Youth Dividend: Basic Income, and the Tail that Wagged the Dog.”](#) *Hankyoreh*. May 21, 2017.

Week 13 (May 7): Basic Income and Development

Readings: *Standing Ch.10.

*James Ferguson. 2015. *Give the Man a Fish*. Introduction.

*Rutger Bregman. 2014. *Utopia for Realists*. Ch.9.

Amataya Sen. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Introduction.

Week 14 (May 14): Basic Income Initiatives and Pilots

Readings: *Standing Ch.11.

*Evelyn L. Forget. 2011. [The Town with No Poverty: The Health Effects of a Canadian Guaranteed Annual Income Field Experiment](#). *Canadian Public Policy* 37(3): 283-305.

*Kate McFarland. 2017. [Overview of Current Basic Income Related Experiments](#). *Basic Income News*.

*Alan S. Gerber and Donald P. Gree. 2011. [Field Experiments and Natural Experiments](#). In Robert E. Goodin ed. *Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. Futurist. [Basic Income Pilot Programs](#).

Week 15 (May 21): Student Presentations

*David Foster Wallace. "[This is Water](#)." Commencement Speech to Kenyon College class of 2005.

Bregman. 2014. Epilogue. In *Utopia for Realists*.

Week 16 (May 28)

Final Project Submission due.

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