

Programs for the Poor

POSC 459 — Social Welfare Politics and Policy

Week 6 · Monday, September 28

Campbell chs. 1–3 · Howard ch. 5 · Desmond ch. 5

Today

1. Which of these is welfare?
2. **Campbell:** one family, two tiers
3. **Howard:** favorite sons, political orphans
4. **Desmond:** the welfare we don't call welfare
5. **Paper 2:** the question, the rules, your thesis
6. Wednesday: no class, an exercise instead

This week

Wed 9/30	No class. At-home exercise, due 11:59 p.m.
Thu 10/1	No office hour. Email me.
Fri 10/2	Paper 2 due 11:59 p.m.

Which of these is welfare?

SNAP (food stamps)

The EITC (a tax credit for low-wage workers)

The mortgage interest deduction

Tax-free employer health insurance

Pell Grants

Dave and Marcella

- Campbell's brother and sister-in-law
- Married 2010, Northern California
- Dave: shop manager, **\$39,000**, no health insurance (p. 3)
- 2012: an accident. Marcella paralyzed, son born early
- Overnight: the bottom tier (p. 2)

Down the rabbit hole

The rule	What it meant
Income: keep \$2,100 of \$3,250 a month	"a 100 percent tax on Dave's earnings" (p. 16)
Assets: \$3,150, total	No savings, no 401(k), no college fund (p. 17)
Family help	A gift counts as income (p. 16)

"Dave and Marcella must stay poor, forever." (p. 16)

Campbell's tiers (ch. 3)

Tier	Examples
Private: employer benefits, tax-subsidized	Health insurance, pensions
Social insurance	Social Security, SSDI, Medicare
Social assistance: means-tested	Medicaid, SSI, SNAP, TANF

"Which protections we enjoy depends on whether we work, and for whom." (p. 31)

Same injury, three tiers

If the person hurt were	Tier	Monthly support
Marcella	Social assistance	SSI + Medi-Cal, \$3,150 asset cap
Dave	Social insurance	SSDI, \$1,267 (p. 50)
Campbell	Private + social insurance	60% of salary (SSDI + employer plan) + \$864 (p. 52)

Same loss, different program

A husband **leaves** → AFDC/TANF

A husband **dies** → Social Security survivors' benefits

Joe Soss, quoted in Campbell, p. 56

Is that deservingness, or design?

1981: who took the cuts

Program	Cut by 1984
Social Security	1.5%
AFDC (welfare)	16%
Food Stamps	19%

Means-tested programs: **under 15%** of the budget, **70%** of the cuts

Howard, pp. 92–93

Then the EITC took off

	1985	1990	2000
Families (millions)	7.4	12.5	19.3
Cost (billions, 2000 \$)	—	< 10	> 32

"No other U.S. social program grew faster" (p. 99)

Two kinds of means-tested program

Favorite sons	Political orphans
Medicaid	AFDC (welfare)
EITC	Food Stamps
	Housing, job training

Howard, p. 92

Why? What Howard rules out

- The policy tool (grant vs. tax credit)
- Cash vs. services
- Who delivers it
- Which agency runs it
- Divided government

pp. 100–101

Why? What holds up

- **Hidden** in giant budget bills
"You can't hit what you can't see" (p. 101)
- **Sweeteners** in deficit deals
- **Champions** inside Congress (Waxman)
- **Framing:** "anything except welfare" (p. 103)

Howard's recipe (p. 107)

1. Change things **a little at a time**
2. **Avoid the spotlight**
3. Say it is **not welfare**
4. Pitch it **differently to different audiences**

His caveat: "two formulas for success, not one"

The case that breaks the recipe

Head Start serves young children.

It did not grow like the EITC.

"What's not to like? There must be something" (p. 108)

Desmond: the poor avoid welfare

Program	Eligible people who take it
TANF	about 1 in 4 families apply
SNAP, older adults	48%
EITC	1 in 5 don't claim it: \$17.3 billion a year

Unclaimed aid, five programs: **nearly \$142 billion a year** (p. 90)

"The American poor are terrible at being welfare dependent." (p. 90)

Who gets the most help?

2020	
Homeowner tax subsidies	\$193 billion
Direct housing aid, low-income families	\$53 billion

Mortgage interest deduction, by income (p. 101):

Under \$20,000	Over \$200,000
\$4 million	\$15.5 billion

Why doesn't it feel like welfare?

Desmond's three answers:

1. **It's invisible.** A tax break doesn't arrive as a check
2. **"They deserve it."** He rejects this one (p. 99)
3. **"We like it."** (p. 101)

Back to the start: which of these is welfare?

Program	Share of Americans
SNAP	14%
EITC	19%
Employer health insurance, tax-free	almost half

"We're all on the dole." (p. 92)

Paper 2

**Is "deservingness" an
explanation, or a label for the
outcome?**

The prompt, in plain terms

Deservingness: the idea that some people have earned help (workers, children, the old, the disabled) and others have not

Pick one:

- **It explains.** Then it predicts something. Say what, and test it on a case.
- **It doesn't.** Then something else does the work. Name it.

The readings for Paper 2

- **Howard**, ch. 5
- **Campbell**, chs. 1–3
- **Desmond**, ch. 5

Use at least one. Gitterman is optional.

The rules

Length	About 600 words
Evidence	One specific claim from a reading, with a page number
Position	Take a side. Both sides = partial credit
Citation	(Howard, 2007, p. 103). No title page, no reference list
AI	Yellow. Last sentence: what tool, what for
Due	Fri 10/2, 11:59 p.m. , Canvas file upload

What cost points on Paper 1

- No page number
- A reading claim stated in general terms
- Never answering the question asked
- Summary instead of a position

Pairs: write one sentence

Deservingness **does / does not** explain _____,
because _____ (Author, year, p. ____).

10 minutes · then three pairs read theirs

Wednesday: run a household through the safety net

- **No class.** Click through the Week 6 Wednesday slides on Canvas
- Run one hypothetical household through two benefit screeners
- Screenshots + **150–250 words**
- **10 points** (participation) · **due Wed 11:59 p.m.**

Last name	Household
A–H	A: single parent, two kids
I–R	B: married couple, one child
S–Z	C: full-time CSUF student

By 2:15 you should be able to say

Programs for the poor can thrive: the EITC did.

Friday's question: does deservingness explain that, or just name it?