

AMST 355
Class and Culture
T, TH, 12:30-1:50
GHH 206
Fall Semester, 2010
Roger Williams University

Michael R. H. Swanson, Ph. D.
Office: GHH 215
Hours M, T, W, Th, F 11:00 - 12:00
and By Appointment
Phone, (254) 3230
e-mail: amst355@gmail.com

Week of September 14

For *Tuesday, September 14*

4th Class Meeting

Watch the [Video](#) before coming to class. It will give you a decent introduction to the David Shipler, and to his book. How did it do over with the students at Case-Western Reserve? What do you think? What one question do you think you'd like to have Shipler answer? We'll come back to that idea after we've finished with the book.

Read, in Shipler, *The Working Poor,*
Introduction, At the Edge of Poverty,

pp. 3 - 12

With Shipler, as with our other authors, our first need is to grasp the author's point of view. So keep this in mind. Why did Shipler choose this particular topic. What does he tell you about his methodology. In other words, what kind of research techniques inform the project. Did his method have any effect on him personally? If so, what? (As you think about this—can you generalize on it into a more universal principle or theory?)

For *Thursday, September 16*

5th Class Meeting

Read, in Shipler,
Chapter 1, Money and its Opposite,

pp.13 - 38

The head quote for this chapter, "You know, Mom, being poor is very expensive," is a good point of entry into the chapter's content. Two themes intertwine here...the first, institutional efforts to improve the lives of the working poor, and the second, institutional practices which harm the lives of the working poor. The chapter considers all sorts of institutions, public and private. At the center is the program known as the Earned Income Tax Credit. Make sure that you understand what this program is and how this program works. Take note, too of the alphabet soup of programs designed to help the working poor, including **SCHIP** and **WIC**. Are there reasons why these programs are not always effective?

ALSO

There is a wealth of information on anti-poverty programs available on the Internet, and I want you to broaden your individual knowledge base and thereby broaden the knowledge base of the class as a whole. One organization which has provided a collection of data is the *Finance Project*, which describes itself and its mission thus:

Our Mission: To support decision-making that produces and sustains good results for children, families, and communities. The Finance Project develops and disseminates research, information, tools, and technical assistance for improved policies, programs, and financing strategies.

The Assignment.

The Finance Project has produced a very large list of resources.

I'd like to have each student in this class *select one* from this list to download, read, and bring to this class. I'd like to have as great a variety of these chosen possible, and to ensure this, I'd like to try this as an experiment.

I've put a new Link on on Blackboard. You'll find it on the left hand side of the page, called *Finance Project*. Here's how to proceed.

Choice will be on a first-come, first served basis.

- 1. Open two browser windows or tabs... one at the Blackboard link, and one at the Project Finance Resource List .
- 2. Look over the previous postings on this Project Finance EITC link on Blackboard. Those previously claimed by other students are no longer eligible.
- 3. Choose yours from the remaining ones eligible.
- 4. Add your name and choice to the list to preserve your claim, by titling your entry with the last name of the author, the first word of the title, and the year of publication.

There are ample (424 at last count) articles from which to choose, so everyone should be able to find one or more of personal interest. I want you to be able to refer to these informally in these initial discussions, and then as appropriate bring them back into the discussions as we work our way through Shipler's book

Just a little suggestion.

Some of you may be thinking seriously about working in the non-profit sector. The Finance Project is a good source for information. I'll be suggesting other sources for you later in the semester.