

AMST 355
Class and Culture
M, W, F, 1:00-1:50
GHH 208
Fall Semester, 2012
Roger Williams University

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Week of September 10, 2012

For **Monday, September 10**

Read, in *Shipler*

<i>Preface</i>	ix - xii
<i>Introduction: At the Edge of Poverty</i>	3 -12
<i>Chapter One: Money and its Opposite</i>	13 - 38

This will be a good chance to think a bit about the difference between a *preface* and an *introduction*. In the short *preface*, Shipler writes about himself, and about the process of researching and writing this book. I think you'll find that this book is in some ways "a *voyage of self-discovery*." What does Shipler set out to do? What does he wind up doing as a by-product? What kinds of person assist Shipler as he crosses class lines to conduct his investigation?

From the *introduction*, identify the two attitudes towards poverty which Shipler calls the *American Myth* and the *American Anti-Myth*. Be aware of the arguments he makes relative to cultural comparisons. How does a person know he/she is "poor".

The head quote for Chapter 1, "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? What might those reasons be? Your journal might be a good place to ponder this question.

For **Wednesday, September 12**

No new work in Shipler—but a little internet research project for you.

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:

The Finance Project was founded in 1994 with support from a consortium of national foundations interested in ensuring the viability and sustainability of promising initiatives that contribute to better futures for children, families, and communities.

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 will post a new Link on on Bridges. 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 Bridges link, and one at the Project Finance Resource List .
- 2.Look over the previous postings on this Project Finance EITC link on Bridges. 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 (446 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.

For, ***Friday, September 14,***

Read, In **Shipler**,

Chapter 2: *Work Doesn't Work*

pp. 39 - 76.

Chapter two provides narratives of three different women in three different locations: *Christie* in Akron, Ohio, *Debra*, of Cleveland, Ohio, and *Caroline*, who moved around a lot, but whose tale is largely centered in Vermont and New Hampshire. As you read their stories, I'd like to have you consider the points of similarity and points of difference between them. As before, also make note of the things that surprise you about them: their accomplishments, their defeats, their successes, their disappointments. Also, try to get a sense of what kinds of things accounted for their setbacks. Take note of their budgets and what kinds of expenses they have on a daily and weekly basis. Record your observations in your journals. In which ways might the *American Myth* and the *American Anti-Myth* apply?

Keep plugging away at Price's *Samaritan*. I'd like it finished in two weeks.