Multi-disciplinary Faculty Colloquium on the Moral Challenges of Poverty

Goals:
This year-long colloquium will be guided by three broad objectives: 1) To reinvigorate normative conversations about poverty and inequality on our campuses, so that we can contribute to these conversations with other institutions and organizations across the state. Faculty from all disciplines and political perspectives will be invited to join the colloquium, but the conversation will be shaped by what is fundamentally a humanistic set of questions. Part of the goal is to foster and encourage productive debate. 2) To restore humanistic methods as a core element of poverty scholarship and public engagement. Qualitative research—the work of humanists from history, literature, and the arts—can provide new questions about how and why policies do or do not work, their impact on our citizens, and the unintended consequences of our political choices. They also can provide powerful narratives that are useful for affecting change, whether in convincing legislators of the need for new approaches, attracting media attention to poverty issues, or helping the general public understand complex problems in accessible ways. While these are certainly not the only disciplinary approaches needed to tackle the problem of poverty, they are the ones that have, to a large degree, been absent from the recent debates, and we want to foster new and challenging conversations between humanists and social scientists. 3) To model a transition from student-centered service learning to public scholarship led by faculty. Such scholarship is sustainable over the long-term, pursues a specific and measurable public good, and is planned and conducted jointly by university and community partners. The goal of such work is to be “translational” as opposed to “translatable.” That is, such work should seek to have a measurable impact on the community including but not limited to the university community.

Structure and Methods:
We will begin with a faculty colloquium for colleagues from Duke and UNC. We will recruit approximately 12 faculty from each campus, including colleagues from the two law schools, the divinity school, and UNC’s School of Government, School of Social Work and School of Public Health, as well as colleagues from economics, sociology, anthropology, and public policy, history and English.

We will meet monthly in a variety of formats. In the early phase, we will start by reading shared texts that will ground faculty members in some of the ethical questions raised by the existence of poverty. Why are people poor? Can or should anything be done to alleviate or eradicate poverty? What obligations do others have to the poor? What rights and responsibilities do the poor possess? What constitutes justice in a state or nation’s approach to poverty? We will also have several meetings spaced throughout the year in which we bring outside speakers to discuss these issues from a variety of perspectives and political backgrounds. Finally, we will schedule two “field trips,” one per semester. These will be one-day trips, one to the east of the state and one to the west. They will be focused around a community in which one of the faculty members has contacts and ongoing projects. These trips will help expose faculty members to the work of their colleagues, to the realities of poverty in this state, as well as to the people and organizations that are working on the front-lines of poverty reduction.
Faculty Convenors:

**Robert Rogers Korstad**
Robert Korstad is the Kevin D. Gorter Professor of Public Policy and History at Duke University. He received his B. A. and Ph. D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research interests include twentieth century U. S. history, labor history, African American history, and contemporary social policy, and he is the co-director of a major documentary research project at Duke's Center for Documentary Studies, "Behind the Veil: Documenting African American Life in the Jim Crow South." His publications include: *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003); *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Talk About Life in the Segregated South* (coeditor, The New Press, 2001); *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (coauthor, University of North Carolina Press, revised edition, 2000).

**James LeLoudis**
Prof. LeLoudis' chief interest is the history of the modern South, with emphases on women, labor, education, race, and reform. He has published two books on these topics: *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (co-authored with Jacquelyn Hall, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher Daly), and *Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880-1920*. He currently has two new projects underway. The first is a study of race, politics, and leadership in the War on Poverty in the South. This work focuses on the North Carolina Fund, one of the most innovative state-level anti-poverty programs of the 1960s, and is based largely on oral history interviews with the Fund's staff, clients, and student volunteers. The second project is an oral history study of school desegregation.

Project Director:

**Rachel F. Seidman** is the Research and Policy Associate at the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University and Visiting Assistant Professor and the Sanford School of Public Policy. Rachel holds a a Ph.D. in American History from Yale University and teaches ethics, and courses on women’s history, leadership and public policy.