

Targeting the Poor (11.471) Assignment #2

The readings of Section IV all reflect on the way in which reform strategies, bureaucratic traits, and important actors (individual or collective—professional associations, shared values and codes of workers, politicians and other elected officials, agency managers, etc.) impact on the way in which government policy and programs targeted on the poor affect their implementation, as well as their ability to reduce poverty and unemployment.

Much of our thinking and that of the current literature of planning, political science and economics focuses on the poor performance of government bureaucracies, and the disincentives that exist for good performance. This means that we don't have an equally developed and systematically analytic way of explaining good performance. Drawing on the literature of Section IV, discuss a selection of such factors—incentives, situations and circumstances, types of tasks and different ways of doing them, and any other factors (such as reducing the resistance to reforms) that the readings showed to be associated with positive rather than negative outcomes, and to motivate *good* performance from bureaucracies, rather than bad. In what way, if any, are these lessons from the readings different from the way planners design policy, programs, and projects—whether in the public or nonprofit sector?

As in the previous assignment, whenever you mention a point drawn from one or more of the articles, put the last name of the author and date of the article in parentheses at the end of the sentence (e.g., Fox 2001). For some points, in which there is overlap in the articles, you may be listing more than one author; this kind of grouping, where appropriate, may actually facilitate your thinking. By the end of the paper, you should have referred to *all* the required authors in Section IV. Do *not* try to cover all the points made in the readings, and *do not summarize* any particular article or articles.

The assignment should be no longer than six double-spaced pages or 1,500 words. The papers can also be shorter, and should have at least one-inch margins for written feedback. The assignment is due before class on March 6. No late papers will be accepted. Those not able to attend class on the day the papers are due should leave a hard copy for me and the TA in the mail slot outside my office at 10:00am the day they are due.