



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL  
POLICY, SOCIOLOGY  
AND CRIMINOLOGY

# Social Policy at the University of Birmingham

## An Introduction

This document is intended to give you a quick introduction to both the discipline of Social Policy and our department here at the University of Birmingham. It also offers you some ways to prepare for the start of your course should you wish to, with recommended reading and resources. Information is also provided regarding upcoming Q&A sessions and how to reach out if you want to get in touch.



## HELLO FROM YOUR ADMISSIONS TUTOR



Hello everyone. My name is Dr Frankie Rogan and I am a Lecturer in the department of Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology at the University of Birmingham. I am also the Admissions Tutor for the department so you may have met me if you've attended open days or offer holder days in the past. We are looking forward to welcoming you to our department in September and are working hard to prepare for your arrival. I hope you find this document useful, and we look forward to you joining our department soon!

# What is Social Policy?

Social Policy is a subject which speaks to the desire to make changes to the social world and to the society we live in. It is a subject which can engage students to not only think about the political debates about human welfare, but also to explore the evidence of key social problems (from poverty to homelessness, from health inequalities to access to higher education) and to figure out what alternative approaches exist and how they might be enacted. The best starting point for a social policy degree is to ask, *what do you want to change?*

Being trained in social policy will enable you to understand the nature of social issues in the UK and beyond. It will encourage you to think through both the causes and consequences of these social issues and to think about solutions to some of the biggest problems facing society today.

# Key Concept: Need

The term 'need' is often utilised in our day to day language but what does it actually mean? How have academics and practitioners defined and understood this term in relation to what we - as humans - need? Should we think about need as mere survival (i.e. what we need to be able survive) or should we think in more detail about what we need to live a full and comfortable life? How do we measure and assess this?

These are the sorts of questions we might think about during a Social Policy degree. Key concepts such as need (and rights, stigma, control, and citizenship) are central to making sense of social policy. Other questions we might consider in relation to the concept of 'need' are:

- To what extent do governments ensure that people's needs are met? What are the key debates associated with this?
- How do particular events or processes prevent people from accessing the things that they need (e.g. the current pandemic)? What can or should be done about this?

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# Something To Read...

While there is no expectation that you have read anything before starting your course, you may be looking for something to do over the summer. I've had many emails asking for recommended readings so please feel free to pick one or two of the texts listed here.

There are also some more in-depth recommendations and staff favourites on the following pages!



Exploring Welfare Debates: Key Concepts and Questions  
by Lee Gregory (2018)



The Violence of Austerity  
by Vicki Cooper and David Whyte (2017)



Why we Need Welfare  
by Pete Alcock (2016)



How Politics Makes Us Sick: Neoliberal Epidemics  
by Ted Schrecker and Clare Bambra (2015)



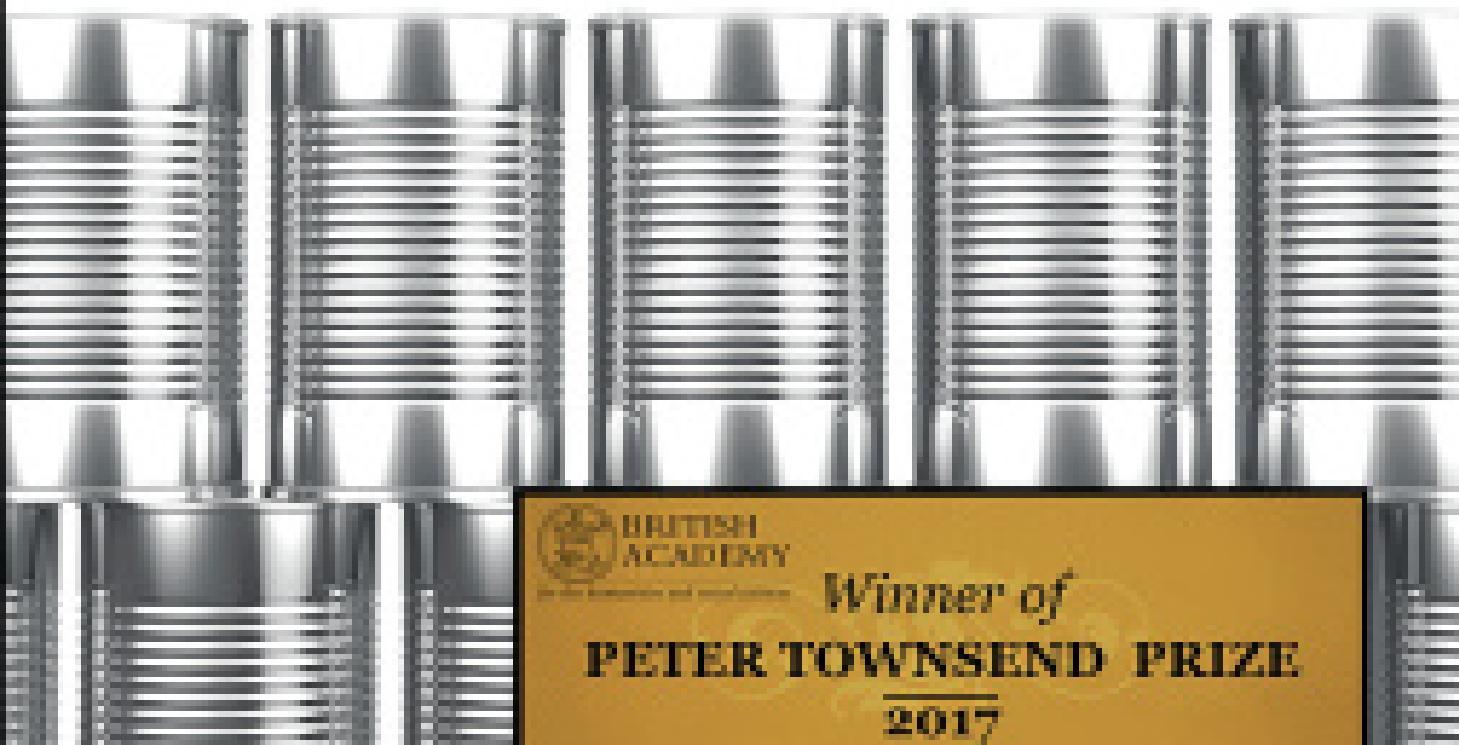
White Privilege: The myth of a post-racial society  
by Kalwant Bhopal (2018)

# HUNGER PAINS

**Life inside foodbank Britain**

**Kayleigh Garthwaite**

*Foreword by Jack Monroe*  
*Afterword by Linda Tirado*



**Recommended by  
Dr Mark Monaghan,  
Head of Department**

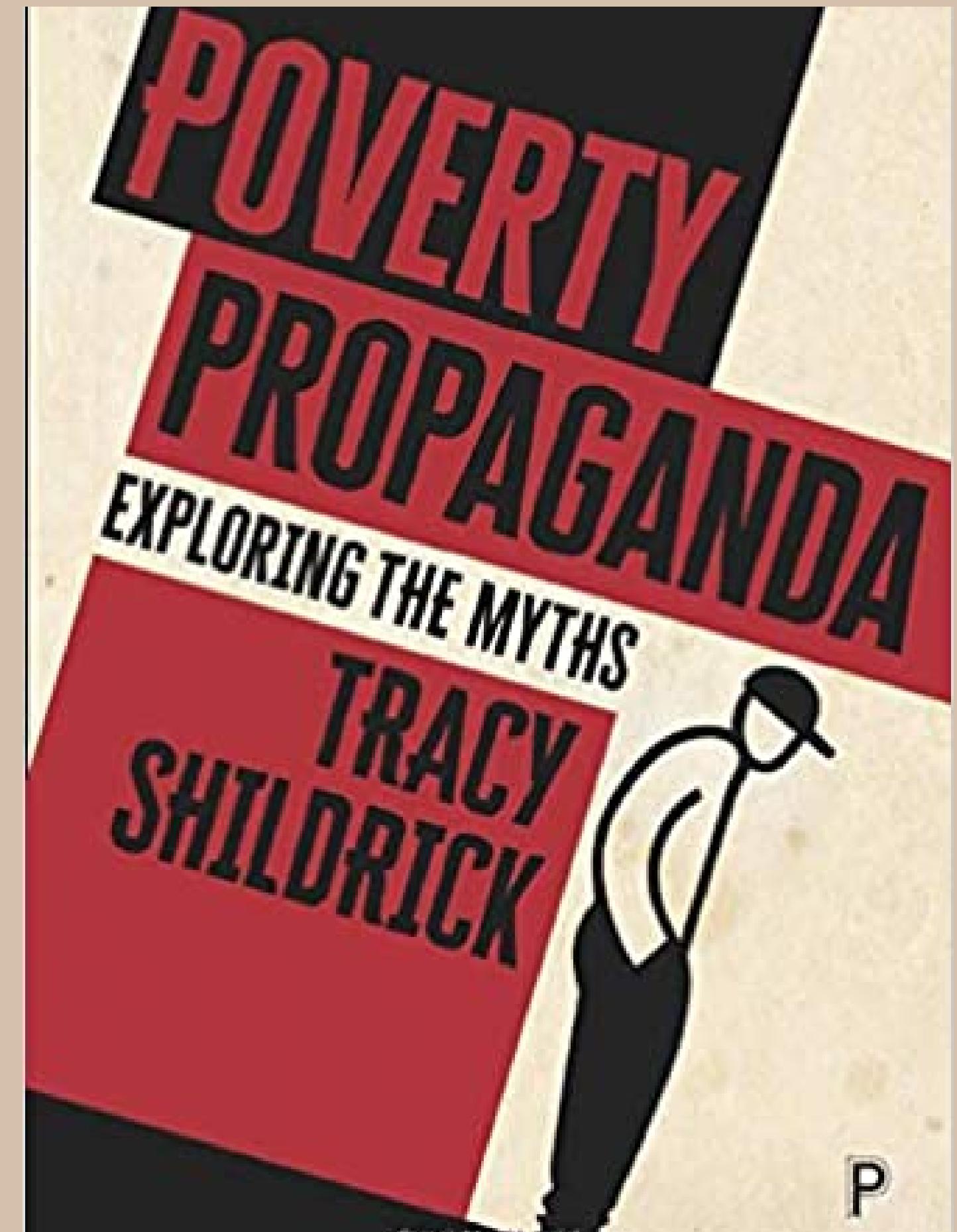


"In *Hunger Pains*, Kayleigh Garthwaite explores the lived experience of those who have to rely on food banks. The research process involved conducting ethnographic research in a Trussell Trust food bank in the North East of England. The book is an interesting and accessible insight into a key social problem that faces us today. *Hunger Pains* won the 2017 British Academy Peter Townsend Prize. It's an added bonus that Kayleigh is a member of our Department!"



Recommended by  
Dr Emily Ball,  
Lecturer in Social Policy

"Tracy Shildrick's *Poverty Propaganda* explores how poverty is understood and experienced in contemporary Britain. It does a great job of challenging many of the prevailing myths and misconceptions around the causes of income inequality. Shildrick has explored issues of poverty and inequality for many years and you can listen to her discuss some of this work on an episode of *Thinking Allowed* [here](#)"



*'A blistering polemic, full of telling details'* Guardian

# CRIPPLED



Frances Ryan

Recommended by  
Dr Kayleigh Garthwaite,  
Birmingham Fellow



"Frances Ryan's book examines the ways in which disabled people have been constructed and demonised by the state. Ryan explores debates around disability, welfare and policy and investigates how austerity in particular operated as a way to further marginalise disabled people. You can find out more about the work of Frances Ryan [here](#) and [here](#)"

# Something to Listen To...

There are also some great social science podcasts available via many of the mainstream providers (e.g. Apple, Spotify). Some recommendations have been listed here, but feel free to explore and find your own too!



Social Science Bites



The Sociology Show



Thinking Allowed



The Sociological Review



# Online Resources

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## DISCOVER SOCIETY

Discover Society is an online journal which cuts across politics, economics, sociology, criminology and social policy – a truly social science publication. But it is also written for the non-specialist. As such it offers lots of topical debates and discussions which will be relevant to your studies: <http://discoverociety.org/>

## THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigour, journalistic flair

The Conversation is a website which contains short articles on a range of subjects written by academics. These articles are written in a more journalistic fashion than ordinary academic articles and is a great resource to help keep up with current academic debates: <https://theconversation.com/uk>

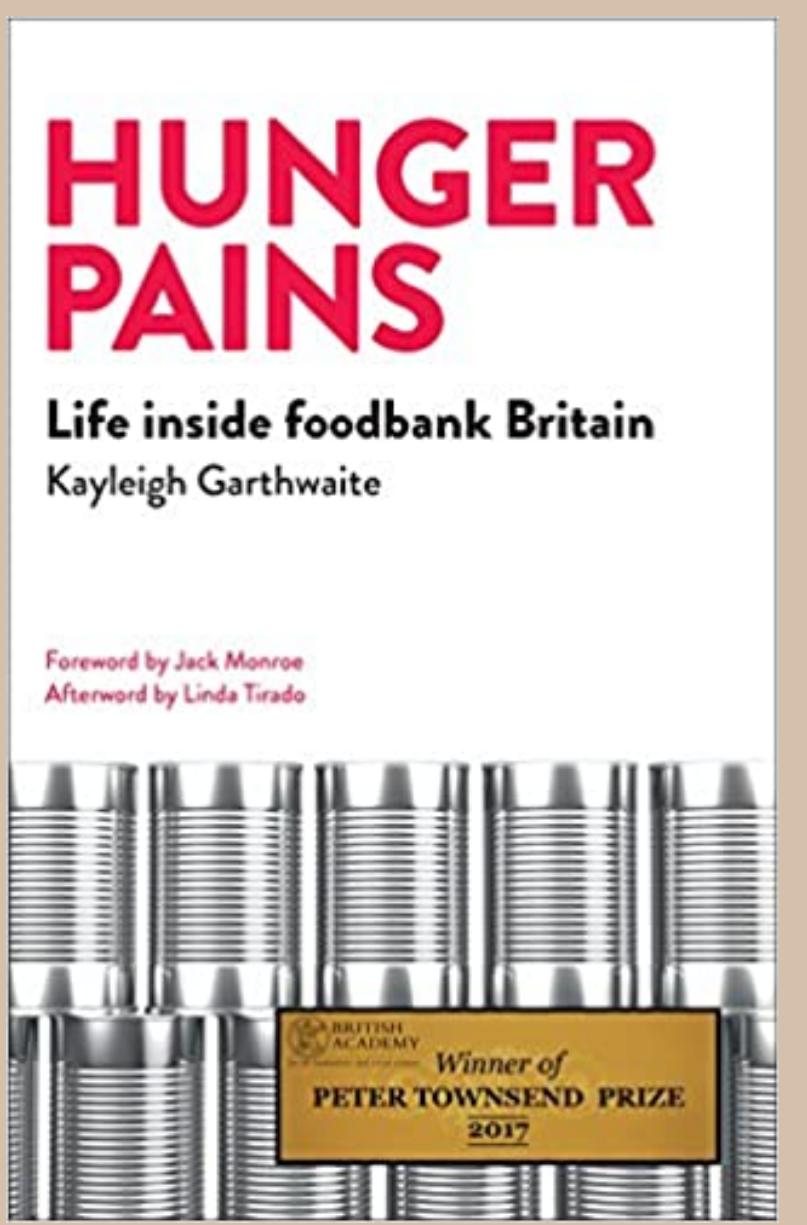
Our School - the School of Social Policy - has recently launched a bi-monthly e-magazine, *Social Policy Matters*, where our students and academics share innovative research and opinions across the areas of sociology, social policy, criminology, health service management and social work. Feel free to check out the latest issue [here](#)

## Social Policy Matters



# Staff Research:

## Dr Kayleigh Garthwaite



You may know that our department is full of active researchers who explore a number of timely and relevant topics in their work. For example, Dr Kayleigh Garthwaite has conducted award-winning research into the issues of poverty, stigma and food bank use. She is also currently part of a project called Covid Realities, which is a research programme looking into the experiences of parents and carers on low incomes during the pandemic.

You can listen to Kayleigh talk about her work on food banks [here](#)

# CONTACT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

There will be a final Q&A session with Dr Frankie Rogan on Thursday 3rd June at 5pm - please do register and attend if you'd like to ask any questions!

Please also feel free to get in touch outside of this time. If you have any general enquiries relating to the department, please do feel free to contact us on:

[ug-sp-soc-crim@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:ug-sp-soc-crim@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

Follow us on Twitter (@UoBSocialPolicy) and Instagram (@uobsocpol) for regular updates.

