The Program in Poverty, Justice and Human Capabilities (PJHC), provides students with a multifaceted understanding of human well-being. A key goal of the minor is to enrich students’ understanding of poverty and inequality, so that, regardless of their choice of occupation, PJHC alumni will maintain a longstanding commitment to enhancing the well-being of all people. More generally, the program trains Rice students to be future leaders in solving global problems.

This interdisciplinary minor emphasizes a “capabilities approach,” which considers what people are able to do and to be — for example, live to old age and engage in economic and political activities — rather than strictly what material goods they possess. The program also acknowledges the central importance of a variety of additional influences on well-being beyond income, such as gender, health status, racial and ethnic disparities, education, human rights, political freedoms, and material necessities, including food and shelter.

Although impediments to human well-being take many forms, barriers to the capabilities of women and girls persist across societies; women and girls are therefore disproportionately represented among the poor and those unable to attain their full capabilities. The academic component of the program, including the content of core and required courses, acknowledges gender inequality as a powerful influence on disparities in human well-being and recognizes gender as a central analytic category.

The PJHC minor combines high-caliber undergraduate courses with service learning experiences at agencies that help disadvantaged communities and people. Students are placed with organizations where they work directly with clients and gain experiential knowledge that broadens their perspectives on human lives and capabilities. Through these academic and experiential learning opportunities, students explore deeper understandings of the structural factors underlying poverty, and human well-being, and potential policy solutions. The program further aims to promote dialogue among all disciplines about how to address issues of poverty alleviation and human well-being with a sophisticated understanding of the challenges and sound strategies for moving forward.

Minor


Poverty, Justice and Human Capabilities does not currently offer an academic program at the graduate level.