$2.00 A DAY: LIVING ON ALMOST NOTHING IN AMERICA
READING GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

As we begin to examine the social and structural barriers to economic stability that many Americans continue to face, you are entering a university dedicated to the pursuit of truth and knowledge in all endeavors. Respect for all individuals’ cultural and intellectual diversity is paramount to our university’s mission. At NC State, we challenge our community members to open their minds and broaden their knowledge base by understanding others’ experiences and views. With the selection of $2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America as the 2018 Common Reading, we hope your Common Reading experience will lead to conversations with fellow students and introduce you to your new academic home.

Created by the Common Reading Selection Committee to assist first-year students in processing $2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America by Kathryn Edin and H. Luke Shaefer, this guide is meant to provide questions for consideration and opportunities for reflection as you read. While the questions posed are not discipline-specific, you are encouraged to consider how the text relates to your future academic studies and the real world applications the text may present.

We hope $2.00 a Day will challenge you to see your experiences and views through different lenses as it has for your faculty and staff and we hope you plan on joining us at Convocation on Monday, August 20 at Reynolds Coliseum to hear from Kathryn Edin and continue the conversation about your 2018 Common Reading selection!

ENGAGE WITH THE COMMON READING
+ **READ** $2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America before returning in August
+ **SHARE** your experience with the book through Twitter and Instagram with #OnePackOneBook
+ **HEAR** about the experiences of NC State students through the Beyond the Belltower Podcast
+ **LEARN** about Pack Essentials, a resource for students at NC State facing food and housing insecurity
+ **JOIN** Author Kathryn Edin and the Class of 2022 at Convocation on Monday, August 20
+ **PARTICIPATE** in book related events (check out the Calendar of Events for events in the fall!!)
+ **APPLY** connected course material and themes from the book to impact your community.

“No matter your field of study, the narrative of this book will challenge you to see your experiences and views through different lenses and demand that you ask yourself how your efforts are impacting our society.

- NC State Provost Warwick Arden
RESOURCES TO ASSIST WITH BASIC NEEDS
NC State is here to help and Pack Essentials has information to assist in locating resources to help students focus on their education. Visit the Pack Essential website to learn more about the program and how NC State is working to end housing and food insecurity.

GO.NCSU.EDU/PACK-ESSENTIALS

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN READING
Discussion questions taken from the authors’ website at www.twodollarsaday.com. For more information, visit go.ncsu.edu/commonreading.

Chapter 1: Welfare is Dead
1. Why is it that although as a country we are spending more on aid for the poor, Edin and Shaefer find that the level of extreme poverty has risen in the last decade?

2. Explain what’s behind Madonna’s contention that “they aren’t giving that out anymore.” Why is it that some people like Madonna who qualify for TANF don’t apply?

3. If you were put in charge of creating a government system of aid for families like Madonna’s what would it look like?

Chapter 2: Perilous Work
4. Edin and Shaefer argue that one of the reasons why subcontractors like Chicago City often pinch their workers is because in order to get contracts, they have to keep their costs incredibly low. What do you think about Debra’s position as a small business owner?

5. If we did something to help small businesses like Chicago City, how do you think it would affect someone in Jennifer’s position?

6. Does the government have a responsibility to help low-wage workers? Do you feel there is anything the government can do to improve working conditions for low-wage workers?

Chapter 3: A Room of One’s Own
7. Has your family ever had to depend on someone else to pay rent, put food on the table, go/stay in school, or start a business? If so, where did you turn, and what was it like to ask for help?

8. Edin and Shaefer argue that doubling up with family and friends brings with it a certain set of risks for the $2-a-day poor. What are these? How do they play out for Jennifer and Rae? Have you ever
had to double up with family or friends for any reason for any longer than a week or two? What was it like? Would you like to do it again? Would you do it if you needed to?

Chapter 4: By Any Means Necessary
9. Which of the survival strategies described in this book would you utilize first if you felt like you had no other options? Which would you utilize last? What are some of the risks that come with each of the strategies?

10. Have you ever benefited from the assistance of a charitable organization? What role did this play in helping you sustain your family or overcome an obstacle?

Chapter 5: A World Apart
11. Given the dominant agricultural economy in the deep south, how have history and technological advancements shaped the work opportunities available to poor adults in this region?

12. Teachers like Mr. Patten can play an integral role in the lives of children, especially those who are poor. If not for Mr. Patten helping Tabitha apply for a scholarship to a boarding school, she may still find herself homeless. Yet, teachers and administrators often find themselves restrained by a lack of resources, especially in places where it is common for children to go hungry. Should we do more to help teachers combat poverty? If so, what should we do?

Chapter 6: Where, Then, From Here?
13. Despite the abuse and the trauma the $2 a day poor are often subjected to, the families profiled in this book find joy, hope, and a sense of perseverance in their children. During difficult times, what or who has given you the strength to move on?

14. Finding affordable housing has become increasingly difficult in the United States. The authors propose increasing the minimum wage and expanding government housing subsidies as ways to help poor families close the gap between income and rent. Do agree with the potential effectiveness of these policy prescriptions? Do you suggest any other policies that can help close the gap between income and rent?

15. In the end, Edin and Shaefner think social inclusion/social incorporation should be the guiding principle of aid to families who are poor. Why do they think this is so important, and do you agree?

Additional Questions to Consider
16. What more do I need to know to better understand poverty and privilege in America?

17. What insights or solutions might be suggested by my intended major? In my possible jobs or careers?

18. What are actions I can take to make a difference? Or what are systemic changes that could make a difference?

19. How could such systemic changes come about? or can they?