## Discussion Questions

# Chapter 9 Welfare and Social Security Policy

1. Discuss: Should the United States increase the minimum wage? What are the pros and cons of doing so? Would doing so alleviate poverty?
2. Discuss: Why do you think it has been so difficult to address issues of entitlement spending? What is necessary in order to get policy makers to move on these issues?
3. Discuss: What explains the demographic discrepancies in poverty rates across the nation, for example, among racial and ethnic groups? How else might the United States address issues of poverty other than through its means-tested programs?
4. Writing followed by discussion. What are the implications of the widening inequality of wealth? What characterizes countries with a fairly equitable income distribution vs. those countries with a big gap between the rich and poor? As the U.S. gap widens, what are the implications or likely changes the United States will experience?
5. Discuss: The level of individual income subject to the Social Security tax was capped at $117,000 in 2014. Should the income level be raised to help address anticipated shortfalls in the Social Security trust fund? Would doing so constitute an unfair taxation on current workers? Would it be more equitable to meet anticipated future demand for Social Security by reducing the level of benefits?
6. Discuss: There has been a lot of debate recently regarding the level of public assistance that should go to the poor and the related question of personal responsibility. Should we move in the direction of less public support for the poor? If so, what are the implications? If not, what should be done?
7. Discuss: The 2014 Farm Bill reduces funding for food assistance programs by 1% annually. What impact will this policy change have on the public? Why is this welfare program part of the Farm Bill? Should it be funded and authorized separately? (Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZulRCc2qo4>)