

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

<b>COURSE/UNIQUE NUMBER:</b> SW 323K/60710	<b>INSTRUCTOR:</b> MIGUEL FERGUSON
<b>SEMESTER:</b> SPRING 2016	<b>OFFICE NUMBER:</b> 3.122B
<b>MEETING TIME:</b> T-TH 12:30-2:00	<b>OFFICE PHONE:</b> 512-232-5914
<b>MEETING PLACE:</b> SSW 2.114	<b>OFFICE HOURS:</b> T-TH 11:30-12:15 OR BY APPT
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**SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND ISSUES  
(W- FULFILLS THE WRITING FLAG REQUIREMENT; REQUIRED BSW COURSE)**

This course carries the Independent Inquiry flag. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

## **I. Standardized Course Description**

This course is the second course in the social policy curriculum area. Prerequisites include Government 310L and 312L (or their equivalents), an introductory economics course, and admission to the social work major. This course is designed to provide students with the ability to analyze contemporary social welfare policy issues and programs and to understand the relationship between social policy and social work practice. The course focuses on the historical, political, economic, and other social conditions that influence policy development in the United States. Specific policy areas that are discussed are those in which social workers play major roles: income maintenance (with a focus on social insurance and public assistance), health, mental health, child welfare, and aging. Policy issues and programs are addressed as they affect majority groups as well as populations-at-risk (e.g., children, people of color, people with disabilities, women, LGBTs) with a particular emphasis on social and economic justice. Students learn to use policy analysis tools in order to understand how policy influences practice and planning decisions and how social workers can influence social welfare policy.

## II. Standardized Course Objectives

By the end of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Understand significant historical events and persons that influenced the field of social work and social welfare policy; **(PB 25)**
2. Analyze the connections between the history and contemporary structures of social policy; **(PB 25)**
3. Understand the impact of economics, politics, and social values on the identification of social problems and policy formation in the United States and the ways that issues of diversity (such as culture, class, gender, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation, and age) have been addressed; **(PB 25)**
4. Apply conceptual frameworks for analyzing the development of social welfare policy; **(PB 25)**
5. Define key concepts in social welfare policy (e.g. universal, residual, public assistance, social insurance, cash, in-kind); **(PB 25)**
6. Understand the major policies that form the foundation of social welfare policy in the U.S.; **(PB 25)**
7. Apply relevant research frameworks for evaluating the effects of social welfare policy on national, state, and local populations and economically vulnerable sub-groups; **(PB 25)**
8. Analyze the impact of social welfare policy in terms of social and economic justice and the promotion of social work values; **(PB 25)**
9. Discuss trends in comparative international social policy; **(PB 25)**
10. Understand roles social workers play in the formation of social policy and the effects of social policies on social work practice; **(PB 25 and PB 26)**
11. Exercise policy advocacy skills at the legislative and organizational levels. **(PB 26)**

The School of Social Work has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1952. In order to maintain our accreditation status, we engage in ongoing curriculum assessment to demonstrate compliance with CSWE's Education Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). Several required courses in our curriculum are part of this ongoing assessment, including this course. Below is a list of the specific Educational Policies (EP) and Practice Behaviors (PB) that are assessed in this course. The complete EPAS can be obtained from your Student Handbook.

### **EP 2.1.8 Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.**

**PB25** Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being

**Objectives:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10

**Assignment:** Class exercises, Food Stamp paper, Policy Analysis Blog

**PB26** Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action

**Objectives:** 10 and 11

**Assignment:** Student day at legislature, class exercises, Policy Analysis Blog

## III. Course Overview and Teaching Methods

The method of the course is founded upon student participation. As professional advocates, it is essential for credentialed social workers to be able to articulate ideas clearly and persuasively. All students are encouraged to participate through discussion in class, via email, or with the instructor during office hours. The format will include lectures, films, guest presentations, weekly readings, framed discussion or class debate, and group exercises.

#### IV. Required Readings

Caught in the Storm: Navigating Policy and Practice in the Welfare Reform Era, Lyceum Books (2010).

And **one** of the following...

- Gottesdiener, Laura (2014). A Dream Foreclosed: Black America and the Fight for a Place to Call Home, Zucotti Press.
- Abramsky, Sasha (2013). The American Way of Poverty: How the Other Half Still Lives. Nation Books.

\* students need only choose one of these books to review

An additional set of required readings per week, drawn from an extensive assortment of articles, book chapters, essays, and electronic media sources, will be made available on Canvas. In addition, an ensemble of films will need to be viewed outside of class throughout the semester. The films will be available on Netflix or Amazon streaming video.

#### V. Course Requirements

Class Participation	10%
Quizzes (3)	30%
Food Stamps Paper	30%
Policy Analysis Blog	30%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 %</b>

#### Participation:

Students will be graded on the quality of their contribution to the collective learning of the class. Since attendance is a key condition of participation, more than two absences will result in a letter at least one grade below an “A.” Each subsequent absence will reduce the overall participation by one letter grade. Students are expected to participate via class discussion, small group activities, and office visits with the instructor. Students may also participate by sharing electronic information and by engaging in activities outside of class that are related to the content covered in the course. On the final day of class students will submit a one-page summary of their participation in the course.

[PB 14, 15, 16& 17]

#### Quizzes:

Students will be given four random quizzes throughout the semester. **Please note, this means that quizzes will be given without prior notice throughout the semester!** The quizzes will cover films and readings assigned for the particular week in which a quiz is given, as well as lecture material from the previous week. Each quiz is worth 10% of the final grade. At the end of the semester, the lowest quiz grade will be dropped (for a total of 30% of the final grade). Because of

this drop policy, no make-up quizzes will be given. This bears repeating: **no make-up quizzes will be given!** Hopefully, this will reduce the number of students coming to my office and saying, “I know the syllabus says no make-ups will be given, but can I please make up quiz #...” [PB 14, 18]

### **Food Stamp Paper:**

The food stamps paper has two options. Option 1 requires students to abide by the budget and food purchase restrictions of a typical SNAP beneficiary for one week. Option 2 requires students to document their normal food purchases for a week and compare the purchases to what is allowed under SNAP rules. With either option, students should include the following in a 7-10 page assessment of their experience:

- 1) Be clear about which option you have chosen (and why).
- 2) Demonstrate an awareness of the eligibility rules that apply to the food stamps program.
- 3) Provide information about what it takes to apply for and receive food stamps [what information is required? Must applicants visit a local DHHS agency location?].
- 4) Describe an appropriate food stamps budget for your household, and defend the appropriateness of the level you have chosen (is it the average or max allotment?).
- 5) Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the program (conceptually and based on your experience) and recommendations to improve the program based on your analysis.
- 6) Clearly and accurately document your purchases during the one-week period.
- 7) Summarize your experience (Was it valuable? What was learned? Etc.). [PB25]

The Food Stamps Paper is due on **March 10**.

### **Basic Information on SNAP**

Texas Administrative Code (searchabl

1. [https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.ViewTAC?tac\\_view=2&ti=1](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=2&ti=1)
2. Health and Human Services Policy Handbook (searchable):  
<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/handbooks/TexasWorks/>
3. SNAP Information: <http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1348>
4. Benefits Calculator: <http://www.ndhealth.gov/dhs/foodstampcalculator.asp>
5. On-line Application and Eligibility Screener (in English and Spanish):  
<https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/ssp/SSPHome/ssphome.jsp>
6. Direct Link to Printable Application for Assistance for TANF, Medicaid, and SNAP (**scroll to bottom of page, click on “get a paper form”**)  
<https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/ssp/SSPHome/ssphome.jsp>
7. Monthly Statistical Data (w/county totals)  
[http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/research/TANF\\_FS.asp](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/research/TANF_FS.asp)
8. Local Office Locator (**click on “Find an Office”**)  
<https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/ssp/SSPHome/ssphome.jsp#>

### **Final Assignment: Policy Blog**

The final assignment is a policy blog that must be completed by students working in two-person teams. Policy blog dyads should develop a blog that covers a social welfare topic that relates to a theme covered in class. For relevant ideas, students may find it helpful to explore the themes covered in the weekly readings. All student teams must discuss the potential topics with the instructor (in-person or via e-mail).

Assignment Criteria

Student policy blogs must include the following:

- A title that speaks to the chosen topic (can be playful, sarcastic, serious, etc.) and a mission statement (**due Feb 25**)
- Comprehensible references to relevant legislation
- A link to and description/analysis of five newspaper articles or reports related to your topic
- A description/analysis of two related, peer-reviewed academic articles (with reference) (**due March 24**)
- Links to and descriptions of two public policy think tanks and their positions on the chosen policy topic (two local think tanks that come to mind are the Center for Public Policy Priorities [cppp.org] and the Texas Public Policy Foundation [www.texaspolicy.com]). If possible, please include a link to at least one report offered by each think tank and the report's connection to your topic
- Informative and well-written descriptions of two legislative or community briefings, events, meetings or activities (at least one team member must attend)

To help students and to meet the writing flag requirement, students will need to turn in draft sections of the policy blogs on the dates in bold, above.

**Due Date: May 5**

**Extra Credit Points.** One point of extra credit is available for students who submit a well-written one-page assessment of a fellow student group's policy blog. Students may submit two separate assessments for two extra credit points. Students may also earn one point of extra credit by attending and then submitting a one-page assessment of the annual Jack Otis lecture in the SSW. This year's lecture by former UT SSW professor King Davis is titled New Directions: Bringing Policy Change in the Post-Obama Era. It will take place on Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup> from 9 - 11:30 a.m. in the Utopia Theatre. \*(Note: two points of extra credit is the maximum allowed)

**School of Social Work Grading Policy and Course Grading Criteria.** With the exception of quizzes, all coursework and the final course grade will be evaluated using the University letter-based grading system. Specific point values will not be assigned. The letter grading system and a brief description of the criteria work to achieve each level of letter grade are given below.

<p><b>VI.</b></p> <p>100 - 94 = A            93 - 90 = A-            89 - 87 = B+            86 - 84 = B            83 - 80 = B-            79 - 77 = C+            76 - 74 = C            73 - 70 = C-            69 - 67 = D+            66 - 64 = D            63 - 60 = D-            59 &amp; below = F</p>	<p><b>SUPERIOR WORK (A):</b> The assignment significantly exceeds expectations and demonstrates in-depth critical thinking/analysis (e.g. coherent integration of ideas, well-developed ideas).</p> <p><b>GOOD WORK (B):</b> The assignment meets <u>all</u> the requirements &amp; demonstrates in-depth critical thinking/analysis.</p> <p><b>AVERAGE WORK (C):</b> The assignment meets the requirements or has <u>minor</u> gaps but fails to demonstrate in-depth critical thinking /analysis. Remember, a course grade of C- (73 points) or lower is considered as a failing grade.</p> <p><b>BELOW AVERAGE WORK (≤D):</b> The assignment has important gaps: does not meet the requirements or fails to demonstrate in-depth critical thinking/analysis.</p>
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1. *Respectful Discussion.* Active and scholarly discussions are expected and welcome. Students are responsible for treating others with courtesy and respect and should promote group cohesion in an effort to create a safe learning environment. Students are expected to listen to fellow class members and respect differences in values, opinions, and feelings. Disrespectful behavior includes overt acts, such as talking over others or making derogatory remarks based on another person's race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age or ability AND covert acts of disrespect, such as excluding class members from discussions or activities.
2. *Class Attendance and Participation.* Ten percent of the course grade is for Active Learning, which includes regular class attendance and participation. **Students are expected to attend all classes**, prepare for each session by reading the materials assigned for that date before coming to class, and participate in class discussions, exercises, etc. **You may miss two classes without penalty.** Students missing several classes will be asked to meet with the instructor to discuss their attendance. **The instructor should be notified in advance of any planned absence and as soon as possible in the case of an unforeseen emergency.** Students are responsible for securing lecture notes and handouts when circumstances require them to be absent. Students are expected to complete the readings prior to class, and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments. Failure to demonstrate through discussions that one has completed the readings will be considered in assigning the class participation grade.
3. *Use of Canvas for Class.* This course uses Canvas, a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://canvas.utexas.edu>. Canvas can be used to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and other course-related work. You will be responsible for checking the Canvas course site regularly for class work and announcements. Students can find support in using Canvas through the website's help section or by calling their Hotline, 855-308-2494. Please plan accordingly.
4. *Requirements for Written Assignments.* The instructor will evaluate your writing on the basis of content, format, and writing style (organization, clarity, grammar, etc.). In accordance with your ability, assignments should be turned in without errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar.

If additional writing assistance is needed please contact The University of Texas at Austin Undergraduate Writing Center at (512) 471-6222 or visit their website at <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>. The instructor will also assist with the organization (not grammar) of your paper by appointment at least one week prior to the assignment due date.

The instructor is also available by email or during office hours to answer questions about assignments. Students should submit questions or requests for clarifications at least 24 hours before an assignment is due. If an assignment is due in less than 24 hours the instructor cannot guarantee a timely response.

5. **Late Assignments.** All assignments submitted after the beginning of class on the day they are due are considered late barring serious, unforeseen medical illness or family emergency. In these extenuating circumstances, contact the instructor on the due date to discuss options for submitting the assignment. Student presentations can only be given on the allotted dates. Penalty for late assignments: 2 points per day (including weekends).
6. **Incompletes.** Only in documented emergency situations will a grade of X (incomplete) be assigned for the course. If an incomplete grade should be assigned, there will be a written agreement with the instructor about when and how the work will be completed. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to make arrangements for an incomplete grade.
7. **Course and Instructor Evaluation.** At the end of the course, students will be asked to submit the official Course Instructor Survey provided by the University. At any time during the course, students should feel free to contact the instructor to discuss the quality of the course and instruction and suggest changes that will facilitate their learning.
8. **Electronics in Class.** Turn off and put away cell phones before class begins. Students may use personal computers in class to take notes or otherwise help with class material and activities. *Students who disrupt class by using cell phones or computers for non-class related activities may be bent over a virtual knee and paddled and/or asked to write a thousand times on the board "I shall not Facebook my peeps during class."*

## VII. University Policies

1. **The University of Texas Honor Code.** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.
2. **Professional Conduct in Class.** The professor expects students to act like professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism. Professional conduct also includes timely arrival to class, respectful behavior during class and appropriate use of technology. No cell phones, ipods or other devices are permitted during class. Computers may only be used for taking notes or relevant in class activities. Any inappropriate use of computers for emailing or internet usage is not permitted. Professional conduct includes respectful and meaningful efforts to participate in group projects. Failure to display professional conduct may result in a deduction from attendance points.

3. ***Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty.*** Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).
4. ***Documented Disability Statement.*** Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.
5. ***Religious Holidays.*** By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.
6. ***Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students.*** Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.
7. ***Safety.*** As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.
8. ***Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL).*** If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.
9. ***Emergency Evacuation Policy.*** Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:



- a. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- b. If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- c. In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.
- d. Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

### I. Course Calendar

Date	Topics	Readings (text)	Assignments Due
Week 1 Jan. 21	Introductions  Course overview		
Week 2 Jan. 28	Theories of the welfare state  The New Deal and the Great Depression The Social Security Act  What does "It's time to raise less corn and more hell!" mean?		
Week 3 Feb. 4	The Great Depression, cont'd The War on Poverty: Win, lose, or draw?	<b>In-class film: Hard Times for an American Girl</b>	
Week 4 Feb. 11	The Great Recession & its aftermath	<b>Film: Inside Job (AP)</b>	

Week 5 Feb. 18	Poverty in America Impacts on important subgroups: African-Americans Latinos Women/children		
Week 6 Feb. 25	Discussion of books  Mass incarceration and its impact on families and communities	Books: American Way of Poverty; A Dream Foreclosed  <b>Film: American Violet</b> (Netflix)	<b>Blog title and mission statement due via email</b>
Week 7 March 3	Strategies for helping families Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) EITC Minimum Wage		
Week 8 March 10	Inequality, American style The importance of SNAP	<b>In-class film: Food Stamped</b> (AP)	<b>Food Stamps Paper due March 10</b>
Week 9	<b>Spring break: No class</b>		
Week 10 Mar. 24	Social Work Day at the Legislature The role of the non-profit sector in social welfare policies and programs	No class on March 22  <b>Reading: Caught in the Storm</b>	<b>2 policy descriptions/ analyses for blog due</b>
Week 11 March 31	The Millennial generation: Problems and Prospects Conservative anti-poverty strategies		

Week 12 April 7	Health care reform & its opposition  Obamacare 101  Medicaid & Women's Health care in Texas		
Week 13 Apr. 14	Aging and U.S. society Social Security: Is the world's largest social welfare program in crisis?  Class exercise: Saving Social Security		
Week 14 Apr. 21	Comparative social policy "Family values or valuing families?" Universal Basic Income		
Week 15 Apr. 28	What constitutes good social policy?		
Week 16 May 5	Policy Blogs Discussion of food stamp papers  Course instructor survey		<b>Policy Blogs</b>  <b>Participation summary due</b>

## VIII. Selected Internet Resources and Websites

### *Poverty and Anti-poverty Policy Websites and Research Organizations:*

- Institute for Research on Poverty [www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp](http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp)
  - The IRP also publishes FOCUS, an excellent welfare and policy related journal.
- Joint Center for Poverty Research [www.jcpr.org](http://www.jcpr.org)
- The Urban Institute [www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org)
- Center for Research on Child Well-being <http://crcw.princeton.edu>
- Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation [www.mdrc.org](http://www.mdrc.org)
- The Brookings Institution [www.brook.edu](http://www.brook.edu)
- National Center for Children in Poverty <http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/>
- Mathematica Policy Research [www.mathematica-mpr.com/](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/)

### *Advocacy Research Organizations:*

- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)
- Center for Law and Social Policy [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org)
- Children's Defense Fund [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)
- National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) [www.nicwa.org](http://www.nicwa.org)
- The Electronic Policy Network [www.movingideas.org](http://www.movingideas.org)
- Pew Hispanic Center <http://www.pewhispanic.org>

### *Texas Policy Advocacy Research Organizations and Resources:*

- Center for Public Policy Priorities [www.cppp.org](http://www.cppp.org)
- Texas Public Policy Foundation <http://www.texaspolicy.com>
- Texas Hunger Research <http://tfn.org/hunger-in-texas/statistics-dashboard/texas-hunger-research-org/>

### *Federal Government sites of interest:*

- U.S. Census Bureau [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
- Congressional Budget Office [www.cbo.gov](http://www.cbo.gov)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)