

**The University of Texas at Austin
School of Social Work
Social Policy Analysis and Social Problems**

Course Number:	SW382R	Instructor:	Miguel Ferguson
Semester:	Spring 2016	Contact Information:	Ferguson: SSW 3.122B miguelf@austin.utexas.edu 512-232-5914
Unique Number, Meeting Time, class:	60920, Monday 5:30-8:15 Room 2.118	Office Hours:	Ferguson: Monday 4:15 - 5:15; after class or by appt.

I. Course Description

This course critically examines, from both historical and current perspectives, the overall structure of the American social welfare system with a focus on the disproportionate social, economic, and political problems of vulnerable populations. The course also considers the parallel historical development of the profession of social work, including the ways in which it responded to social problems across key periods of social welfare policy development.

II. Course Objectives

Note: The School of Social Work has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1952. To maintain accreditation status, the school engages in ongoing curriculum assessment to demonstrate compliance with CSWE's Educational Policy 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. Information about the complete EPAS can be obtained from your Student Handbook.

EP2.1.8 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.
Course objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7.
Assignment matches: Quizzes, book review, policy blog, food stamps analysis paper

PB26 Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action.
Course objectives 2 & 8.
Assignment match: Policy presentation, food stamps analysis paper

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the dominant historical themes that have shaped social welfare policy in the United States; (PB25)
2. Understand the economic and political constraints and opportunities in the development of social welfare problems and policies; (PB25 & 26)

3. Understand the relationship between the history of the social work profession and the development of social welfare policy; (PB 25)
4. Apply social work values to critically analyze social problems; (PB 25)
5. Gain knowledge and skills as a background for analyzing major policies that form the foundation of social welfare and analyze organizational, local, state, national and international issues in social welfare policy and social service delivery; (PB 25)
6. Understand social welfare policy arenas impacting service delivery, social work practice, and attainment of individual and social well-being; (PB 25)
7. Understand how social policies differentially affect diverse populations in American society; (PB 25)
8. Gain knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of social workers in the policy process, including advocacy, leadership, research, and community organizing, with the goal of promoting and advocating for social and economic justice through both organizational and social change. (PB 26)

III. Teaching Methods

The teaching methods used in this course are interactive lectures, involvement in the legislative process, films, guest presentations, weekly readings, framed discussions, group exercises, and student briefings. Student participation is critical to the teaching and learning in this course. As professional advocates, social workers must be able to articulate ideas clearly and persuasively. All students are encouraged to actively participate during in class discussions and with the instructor during office hours.

IV. Required Readings

Books

Gottesdiener, L. (2014). *A Dream Foreclosed: Black America and the Fight for a Place to Call Home*.

* Edin & Shaefer, (2015). *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*.

* Herbert, B. (2014). *Losing Our Way: An Intimate Portrait of a Troubled America*

* Levitsky, S. (2014). *Caring for Our Own: Why There is No Political Demand for New American Social Welfare Rights*

Other readings for each week will be made available on Canvas.

* Students will only be required to read one of these books.

V. Class Policies

1. **Professional conduct:** Your attendance, attention, and participation are expected for all class sessions. Attendance includes arriving on time and remaining for the entire class session. Participation includes reading all assigned materials prior to the class session and engaging in class discussions and exercises. Lively class discussion is encouraged. Respectful communication is necessary to the learning environment. Attention includes turning off cell

phone ringers and refraining from text messaging and other non-class activities. Students are also expected to observe professional codes of conduct with regard to confidentiality, dress, language, and other matters and exercise good judgment while working with agencies, organizations, and other entities on assignments for this course.

2. **Observance of religious holy days:** By UT Austin policy, students are responsible for notifying the instructor 14 days prior to the observance of a holy day. If the due date for a written assignment or class presentation conflicts with a holy day, see the instructor as soon as possible to discuss a scheduling adjustment. If you miss a class quiz due to a religious holy day, you will have an opportunity to make up the quiz.
3. **Submitting assignments:** (a) All written assignments should be typewritten in 12-point font; 1.5 spaced (b) Assignment due dates are noted in the course calendar. **All** assignments are due at the start of the class period. Assignments turned in after the start of class will be considered late for that day unless **prior** arrangements have been made with the instructor. Except in the case of serious illness or emergency, **five points** will be deducted for each day an assignment is late (weekend days included). Appropriate referencing of citations (authors, titles, page numbers, etc.) is required. This includes giving due credit to others when indirect quotes (paraphrasing) and direct (verbatim) quotes are used. Short direct quotes (less than 40 words) must be placed in quotation marks. Long direct quotes (40 or more words) must be indented. Paraphrasing requires more than changing a word or two in a sentence.
4. **The University of Texas Honor Code and Scholastic Dishonesty:** The University of Texas at Austin's core values 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. Scholastic dishonesty is a violation of the honor code. It harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University. UT Austin's policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. They are found in Appendix C, Chapter 11 of *General Information 2012-2013* (<http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/>) and at the Dean of Students, Student Judicial Services' website (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis.php>). Scholastic dishonesty may result in a report to the MSSW Program Director, the Dean of the School of Social Work, the Dean of the Graduate School, and/or Student Judicial Services. Students may receive an "F" for the course and other sanctions in accordance with University policies, including dismissal from the university.
5. **Course modifications:** Should any modifications or changes need to be made to the course (e.g., calendar, assignments), students will be notified in class and/or by e-mail. Students should check their e-mail frequently, and students who are absent from class should check on announcements made in class during their absence.
6. **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 also notify the instructor of any safety concerns.

7. **Students with disabilities:** Students who require accommodations related to a disability should obtain a letter from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 866-329-3986 video phone). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be addressed. For more information, go to <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.
8. **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: 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. If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor/instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instructions of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office. For more information on emergency procedures and evacuation routes, go to <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency/>.
9. **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. 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 go to <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.
10. **Electronic Communication:** During the semester, the course Canvas site will be used for various purposes (posting some documents, grades, etc.). Some course communication will also be done via e-mail. E-mail is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements and for informing the university about changes to your e-mail address. Please check your e-mail frequently to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical.

VI. Course Assignments and Student Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on (a) class participation, (b) quizzes, (c) a book review and (d) a policy presentation/food stamps paper.

- A. Class participation: (15%)** Students will be graded on the quality of their contribution to the collective learning pursuits of the class, including participation in class and group e-mail discussions and/or office visits with the instructor. Since attendance is a key condition of participation, more than two absences will result in a letter grade at *least* one grade below an "A". Each subsequent absence will reduce the overall participation grade by one letter grade. At the end of the semester students will provide a self-assessment of their participation to the instructor that will be used to inform the final participation grade. **[PB26]**
- B. Quizzes: (30%)** 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]

C. Words Beyond Walls: (25%) To enhance course learning about the topics covered in this course, students will interact with members of the “Concerned Lifers” book club, a group of inmates from several prisons in Washington state. Club members have completed critical reviews of *\$2.00 A Day*, *Losing Our Way*, or *Caring for Our Own*. Students must respond to the strengths and weaknesses of the books and the Concerned Lifer review in a 6- to 8-page critical narrative. Book club members have been given leeway to include personal reflections and comments about prison life in the course of their review. As a student reviewer, you should analyze the strengths and limits of the inmate’s book review, and advance your own ideas about the book. Overall, your critique should demonstrate your mastery of the book’s content and the Concerned Lifer review and your ability to provide constructive feedback. The review should be in 12-point font with 1.5 spacing. Because this is a short paper, you will need to write clearly and concisely. Note that your own critical review is more important than merely summarizing the main issues and activities of the book or the Concerned Lifer review. A selection of student reviews will be sent to book club members for comment and review. **The book review is due March 7 and is worth 25% of the final grade.** (PB25)

D. Policy Presentation or Food Stamps Paper (30%)

Policy Presentation

Working in pairs of two, students will deliver a 15-20 minute “policy pitch” to a group of national political party officials (of your choice) interested in pursuing an innovative campaign to galvanize support for their party in 2016 and beyond. The policy pitch should describe a critical population of interest, a set of 2-3 policies that would be popular among these important voting demographics, and ideas with which to publicize the ideas you espouse. More information about this assignment will be posted on Canvas. [PB25, PB26]

Or

Food Stamps Paper: Students may choose to independently participate in a one-week “SNAP Challenge.” Because it is important for students to have personal experience with policies that affect low-income populations, you may elect to fulfill one of the following two options:

Option 1 – submit a 6-8 page report on what it was like to live within the budget and rules of the food stamps (renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP) program for one week; or

Option 2 – submit a 6-8 page report that provides a detailed accounting of your food purchases/expenditures for one week. The report should examine and compare your purchases in light of food stamp budget allowances and regulations. Both options are intended to familiarize students with the SNAP, a program that serves more than forty million Americans, and to demonstrate your knowledge of program strengths and weaknesses.

Whatever option you choose, the paper should include the following:

1. Be clear about which option you have chosen (and why)

2. Provide a brief history of the food stamps program and demonstrate an awareness of the rules that apply to program eligibility
3. Provide information about the size and scope of the program in Texas and nationally, and what it takes to apply for and receive food stamps in Texas
4. If you choose option 1, describe an appropriate food stamps budget for your household, and defend the level you have chosen (e.g. is it the monthly maximum? The average?)
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 and research findings where appropriate (*note: the recommendation section should follow the description of your experience*)
6. Clearly and accurately document your purchases during the one-week period
7. Summarize your experience (Was it valuable? What did you learn?)
8. Though this is an experiential paper, you should utilize research findings to bolster your arguments whenever possible

Basic Information on SNAP

1. Texas Administrative Code (searchable):
[http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac\\$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=4&ti=1&pt=15&ch=372](http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=4&ti=1&pt=15&ch=372)
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.hhsc.state.tx.us/help/Food/snap.shtml#monthlyfoodstamp>
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
8. Local Office Locator (click on “Find an Office”)
<https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/ssp/SSPHome/ssphome.jsp#>

Assignment Due Date: The policy presentations and Food Stamp papers will be due on May 2.

****Extra Credit:** One point of extra credit is available for students who submit a well-written one-page assessment of a fellow student group’s policy presentation. 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 6th from 9 - 11:30 a.m. in the Utopia Theatre. *(Note: two points of extra credit is the maximum allowed)

A)	Class Participation	(15%)
B)	Book Review	(25%)
C)	Quizzes	(30%)
D)	Policy Presentation/Food Stamps Paper	(30%)

Grading Scale: The grade for each course assignment and the final course grade will be based on the following scale:

100 - 94 = A Work is exceptional on all criteria	76 - 74 = C
93 - 90 = A-	73 - 70 = C-
89 - 87 = B+ Work is good/very good on all criteria	69 - 67 = D+ Work is inadequate on some criteria
86 - 84 = B	66 - 64 = D
83 - 80 = B-	63 - 60 = D-
79 - 77 = C+ Work is adequate on all criteria	59 & below = F Work inadequate on most/all criteria

VII. Course Calendar

Date	Topics	Readings (text)	Assignments Due
Week 1 Jan. 25	Introductions Course overview		
Week 2 Feb 1	Theories of the welfare state American Exceptionalism The New Deal and the Great Depression		

Week 3 Feb 8	The Great Depression, cont'd The Social Security Act The War on Poverty: Win, lose, or draw?	In-class Film: Hard Times for an American Girl	
Week 4 Feb. 15	The Great Recession & its aftermath	Film: Inside Job	Book: A Dream Foreclosed
Week 5 Feb. 22	Poverty in America Impacts on important subgroups: African-Americans Latinos Women/children		
Week 6 Feb. 29	Strategies for helping families Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) EITC Minimum wage		
Week 7 March 7	Discussion of books Mass incarceration and its impact on families and communities	Guest speaker: Terri LeClerq Film: American Violet (AP/Netflix)	Book Review due
Week 8 March 14	Spring break: No class		
Week 9 Mar. 21	Inequality, American style The importance of SNAP	In-class film: Food Stamped	
Week 10 Mar. 28	The role of the non-profit sector in social welfare policies and programs		
Week 11 April 4	Millennial Problems and Prospects Republican anti-poverty ideas		

Week 12 April 11	Health care reform & its opposition Obamacare 101 Medicaid & Women's Health care in Texas		
Week 13 Apr. 18	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. 25	Comparative social policy Universal Basic Income What constitutes good social policy?		
Week 15 May 2	Policy Presentations Discussion of food stamp papers Course instructor survey		Presentations/FS Papers Participation summary due

VIII. Course Evaluation

In addition to the official Course Instructor Survey that all students will be asked to complete at the end of the term, student input is welcome throughout the term to improve the course.

IX. Additional References

Selected Web Sites on Poverty, Antipoverty Policy, and Welfare Reform

Institute for Research on Poverty (www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/)

See their own publications as well as their links to other poverty-related sources.

The IRP also publishes FOCUS, an excellent welfare and policy related journal.

Joint Center for Poverty Research (www.jcpr.org/)

The Urban Institute (www.urban.org/)

Center for Research on Child Well-being (<http://crcw.princeton.edu/>)

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (www.mdrc.org)

The MDRC is a non-profit, nonpartisan social policy research organization. The MDRC leads the field in evaluations of welfare-to-work programs.

The Brookings Institution (www.brook.edu/)

National Center for Children in Poverty (<http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/>)

Mathematica Policy Research (www.mathematica-mpr.com/)

The following is a list of advocacy research organizations that provide useful information:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (www.cbpp.org)

Center for Law and Social Policy (www.clasp.org)

Children's Defense Fund (www.childrensdefense.org/)

The Electronic Policy Network (www.movingideas.org/)

The EPN has extensive links to other liberal research centers and The American Prospect, a bi-monthly journal.

Center for Public Policy Priorities (www.cppp.org)

Government sites of interest:

U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov/)

Congressional Budget Office (www.cbo.gov)

Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov)