

SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY

Social Work 382R
Spring, 2012
Unique #: 62600

Tuesday 5:30-8:15 p.m.
Room: 2.112

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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 (for example, the Great Depression, the New Deal, the Great Society and the War on Poverty, urban renewal, the contemporary period of welfare reform and the banking and housing market collapse).

Note on 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 instructors regarding any safety concerns.

Note on UT disability policy: Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

Course Objectives

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; **(PB 25)**
2. Understand the economic and political constraints and opportunities in the development of social welfare problems and policies; **(PB 25 and 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)**.

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
Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7

Assignment matches: Quizzes, book review, food stamps report, op-ed/policy briefing

PB26 Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action
Objectives 2 and 8

Assignment matches: class participation, op-ed/policy briefing

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 optioned from your Student Handbook.

Overview of the Course

The semester begins with a brief review of the evolution of social welfare policy in the U.S. Frameworks for understanding the origins of the modern welfare state are then developed. In particular, these frameworks seek to explain the patchwork of services that form the foundation of, as the title of a popular textbook describes, the “reluctant” U.S. welfare state. The course proceeds to examine trends in poverty, inequality, and social welfare across major historical eras, culminating in an examination of contemporary problems and policies (with special regard paid to low-income women, children, and ethnic minority groups). Since the course is taking place in the aftermath of the budget-cutting 82nd session of the Texas legislature, statewide policy and politics will be interwoven throughout the course. The past is prologue to the devolution of social services and recession-driven policy that currently structures relief systems and social welfare policies in the U.S. This class will connect historical efforts with contemporary policy responses to help students better understand and evaluate current social problems and attempts to address them via policy.

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 discussions in class, via e-mail, or with the instructor or teaching assistant during office hours. The format will include lectures, films, guest presentations, weekly readings, framed-discussions, group exercises, and student briefings.

Course Readings

Students will be required to read the following two books:

Social Welfare: Politics and Public Policy (7th edition) by Dinitto & Johnson. The book is available at reduced cost in an electronic version at <http://www.coursesmart.com/essentials-of-social-welfare-politics-and/diana-m-dinitto-david-h-johnson/dp/9780205011766>

Caught in the Storm: Navigating Policy and Practice in the Welfare Reform Era (Ferguson, Neuroth-Gatlin, & Borasky). This book may be purchased directly from the publisher at <http://www.lyceumbooks.com/default.html>. Used copies may also be available at the UT co-op.

One of the following two books is also required:

Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America’s Class War, by Joe Bageant
Flat Broke in the Free Market: How Globalization Fleeced Working People by Jon Jeter

Other course offerings are drawn from an extensive assortment of articles, book chapters, essays, films, and electronic media sources. These will be available as pdf

documents in a weekly packet via Blackboard or, in the case of films, on reserve in the LRC.

Course Requirements

There are no in-class midterms or final exams. Students will be graded on a series of proportionally weighted requirements, including:

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|----|-----------------------|-------|
| A) | Class Participation | (10%) |
| B) | Quizzes | (25%) |
| C) | Book Review | (20%) |
| D) | Food Stamps Report | (20%) |
| E) | Op-ed/Policy Briefing | (25%) |

⊗ Class Participation

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]**

⊗ Quizzes

Students will be given five (5) quizzes throughout the semester; four on a random basis. The quizzes will ask basic questions about weekly class lectures and readings, so it will be important for students to be thoroughly familiar with the readings for the current week and lecture material covered in the previous class. Students will be allowed to drop the lowest grade they receive from the random quizzes. Because of this drop policy, **no** make-up quizzes will be given. **[PB25]**

⊕ Book Review

Words Beyond Walls: In an effort to enhance the learning experience of the topics covered in this course, students will interact with members of the “Concerned Lifers” book club, a group comprised of inmates from several prisons in the state of Washington. Members of the Concerned Lifers Book Club have completed critical reviews of Deer Hunting with Jesus and Flat Broke in the Free Market. Students must respond to the book and the Concerned Lifer review in a 6-8 page critical narrative. The narrative should analyze the book review on its own merits. Book Club members have been given leeway to include personal reflections and comments about prison life in the course of their review. Student reviews should analyze the strengths and limits of the inmate’s book review, and advance your own ideas about the book’s major concepts. 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 12-point font and 1.5 spaced.

Because this is a short paper, you will need to be concise, making your points clearly and succinctly. Please note that your critical point of view 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. **[PB25]**

Assignment Due Date: The papers are due on Tuesday, **March 6**.

Note: Except in the case of emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, **late writing assignments will not be accepted without penalty**. Students are expected to turn in all required assignments on the agreed upon due date **at the beginning of class**. Assignments turned in after class starts will be considered late. Late assignments will be assessed point penalties at the rate of four (4) points each day late. If there is an unavoidable and compelling problem, then the student should discuss this *a priori* with the professor.

⊗ **Food Stamps Report**

It is important for social work students to have personal experience with issues that affect low-income clients. You may elect to fulfill one of the following two options:

Option 1 – submit a 5-7 page report (12 point font, 1.5 spaced) on what it was like to live within the budget and rules of the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP) [or food stamps, as it has traditionally been known] for two weeks; or

Option 2 – submit a 5-7 page report that provides a detailed accounting of your food purchases/expenses for two weeks. The report should examine and compare these purchases in light of food stamp budget allowances and regulations. Both options are intended to familiarize students with the food stamp program, and to demonstrate your knowledge of program strengths and weaknesses. The reports may be submitted anytime during weeks 5-12 (**February 14-April 3**). Whatever option you choose to pursue, the paper should include the following:

- 1) Be clear about which option you have chosen (and why).
- 2) Demonstrate an awareness of the program's history and the rules that apply to the food stamps program.
- 3) Provide information about what it takes to apply for and receive food stamps.
- 4) Describe an appropriate food stamps budget for your household, and defend the appropriateness of the level you have chosen.
- 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 two-week period.
- 7) Summarize your experience (Was it valuable? What was learned? Etc.). **[PB25]**

TEXAS — Health and Human Services Commission – “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)”

- **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)
- **Health and Human Services Policy Handbook** (*searchable*)
<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/handbooks/TexasWorks/>
- **SNAP Information**
<http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/Help/Food/FoodStamps/index.html>
- **Benefits Calculator**
<http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/programs/FoodStamps/estimator/index.html>
- **On-line Application and Eligibility Screener** (in English and Spanish)
<https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/ssp/SSPHome/ssphome.jsp>
- **Direct Link to Printable Application for Assistance for TANF, Medicaid, and SNAP**
https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/ssp/SSPHome/forms/en_US/blankapplication/M5017_H1010_09_10.pdf
- **Monthly Statistical Data** (w/county totals)
http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/research/TANF_FS.asp
- **Local Office Locator** (click on “Find an Office”)
<https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/ssp/SSPHome/ssphome.jsp#>

⊗ **Op-Ed/Briefing**

Students must team up with a classmate to develop and write an Opinion Editorial related to problems, issues, programs, policies and other material covered in class. Students who successfully publish an op-ed in any one of Texas’ ten largest daily newspapers will receive an automatic 100% for the assignment. [Otherwise, Op-Eds will be graded by the instructor and TA – and we’re meaner than most newspaper copy editors!] All students will be required to post on Blackboard and then succinctly summarize their Op-Eds in informal briefings to be conducted in class during the final week of the course. Subjects selected for this assignment must be pre-approved by the instructor, and students must submit a rough draft by **April 17**. More information about this assignment will be given during the third week of class. **[PB25, PB26]**

Assignment Due Date: Final versions of the op-eds are due on Tuesday, **May 1**.

Or

Students may team up with a classmate to deliver a 15-20 minute “policy pitch” to a group of political party officials interested in pursuing an innovative campaign to

galvanize support for their party in the 2012 elections and beyond. The policy pitch should describe a population of interest, 2-3 policies that would be popular among an important voting demographic, and ideas with which to publicize and fund the ideas you espouse. More information about this assignment will be given during the third week of class. **[PB25, PB26]**

Assignment Due Date: The policy briefings will be given on Tuesday, **April 24.**

****Extra Credit:** Students who wish to earn two points of extra credit may write a 2-3 page review of a film covered in class.

Grades

Grades will be determined as follows:

100 - 94 =	A	93 - 90 =	A-	
89 - 87 =	B+	86 - 84 =	B	83 - 80 =B-
79 - 77 =	C+	76 - 74 =	C	73 - 70 =C-

Course Evaluation

At the end of the term students will have the opportunity to evaluate the course and the instructor using the official Course Instructor Survey of the School of Social Work at UT-Austin. Of course, constructive feedback on the class is welcome throughout the duration of the term.

Course Schedule

Date	Description	Textbook
Week 1 1/17	Introduction and overview of the course Rules for being a conscious social worker Video: Influencing State Policy	<i>No readings</i>
Week 2 1/24	Theories of the welfare state The Children’s Bureau Highlights of social work history	DiNitto , Introduction & Chap. 1
Week 3 1/31	What caused the Great Depression? Video: The Great Depression Huey Long & “Everyman a King”	

	The Social Security Act	
Week 4 2/7	The War on Poverty and the Great Society Social Movements in the 60's	
Week 5 2/14	The Latino experience: poverty and policy Demographic trends in Texas	DiNitto , chap. 11 & 12
Week 6 2/21	The African-American Experience Wealth and Income Divides	
Week 7 2/28	Poverty and inequality in America Women, children & poverty Welfare and its reform Class exercise	DiNitto , chap. 4 & 7
Week 8 3/6	Mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex *Book Review Due*	
Week 9 3/13	No class – Spring Break	<i>No readings assigned</i>
Week 10 3/20	The politics of health care Medicare, Medicaid & CHIP Health care reform	DiNitto , chap. 8
Week 11 3/27	The demographics of aging Social Security: America's #1 anti-poverty tool	DiNitto , chap 5 & 10 (pgs 386-392)

Week 12 4/3	Corporate welfare The Great Recession Conservative politics and the 2012 election * Food Stamps report due*	DiNitto , chap. 3 (97-101)
Week 13 4/10	International perspectives Family values vs. valuing families Foreign Policy	
Week 14 4/17	Towards the common good Big ideas to reinvigorate America Frameworks for evaluating good social policy *Op-Ed Rough Draft Due *Quiz on <u>Caught in the Storm</u>	DiNitto , Chap. 2 & 9 Ferguson et al , "Caught in the Storm"
Week 15 4/24	Student Policy Briefings	No readings assigned
Week 16 5/1	Student op-ed discussions Course evaluations *Final Op-Ed Due	No readings assigned

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)