SOCIAL POLICY ANALYSIS AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS (MSSW)

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 (for example, the New Deal, the War on Poverty, urban renewal, the contemporary period of welfare reform).

II. 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).
Curricular Assessment

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.

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 polices that advance social well-being
   Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7
   Assignment: Policy Analysis Portfolio, Exams
PB26 Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action
   Objectives 2 and 8
   Assignment: Policy Analysis Portfolio, Exams

III. Overview of the Course and Teaching Methods

This foundation course will cover knowledge, skills, and values for policy practice in all direct practice settings, as well as for assuming positions of leadership and influence as advocates, policy planners, administrators, lobbyists and expert advisers to policy-makers. The course covers the following content:

- the history, mission, and philosophy of the social work profession and the evolution of social welfare policy
- major social policies and programs dealing with civil rights protections, poverty, children and families, health and mental health, and older adults, which have been created to address the needs of individuals, families, and communities
- tools for determining need and analyzing social policy using comprehensive frameworks with special attention to equity and social justice
- ways for social workers to intervene in social policy development and policy practice

I will teach this course using the backward design method, which focuses on what I want to empower students to do with the course material. Students will gain a set of policy practice skills drawing on the knowledge and understanding of social policy obtained in the course. Students will engage in policy practice modules attached to each weekly unit.

The classroom sessions will include lecture/discussion, activities, work in small groups, and problem-solving and analysis. Participation is an essential component of the learning experience in this course. Students are expected to be prepared for class by having read all assigned readings, completing worksheets and other assignments, and being ready to participate in the topics and activities for the classes.
IV. Required Readings

**Text and Supplementary Workbook**


**Complementary Readings (Available on Blackboard)**

Web Resources for Policy Practice Portfolio: Companion Resources to Assigned Chapters


V. Course Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active involvement in discussion, completed worksheets, attendance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Analysis Portfolio</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Including preliminary drafts and background work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
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**NOTE:** Submit all assignments in hard copy (unless electronic copies are requested).

**Policy Analysis Portfolio**
Social policy analysis and practice entails a set of skills, which we will break down into smaller components. Students will engage in a series of policy practice modules throughout the semester and will learn to perform six key components of policy analysis and practice:

1. Define and document problems and needs
2. Translate client issues into policy initiatives (and identify policy alternatives)
3. Conduct a dual client assessment and incorporate clients’ perspectives in policy development
4. Prepare a client advocacy plan
5. Develop a policy/program evaluation plan
6. Apply the claims making process

For a final project, students will prepare a policy analysis portfolio applying the policy practice components to a social policy area of interest. We will dedicate one week each to practice these policy analysis components. Students will be expected to come to class prepared to present their weekly analysis to the class (bring assigned worksheets, notes, textbook, and copies of complementary readings). Students will be expected to work on their portfolio in tandem with the weekly schedule and to consult with the Teaching Assistant and professor on drafts of their modules. All the assigned readings and class work will provide the background to complete this assignment; for the strategies on how to implement each policy analysis component, draw especially from Chapters 1, 5, and 6 in the textbook. The final portfolio report will include six sections to correspond to each practice module. You will be evaluated on your ability to appropriately apply the policy skills listed above in a manner that demonstrates in-depth critical thinking/analysis. An evaluation rubric will be provided.
VI. Course Schedule

The course is organized into three parts:

1. Frameworks and Context for Understanding Social Policy
   - June 2
     - Overview of the Course: What's policy got to do with it?
   - June 7/9
     - Frameworks and Context for Understanding Social Policy

2. Tools for Analyzing and Influencing Social Policy
   - June 14
     - Class Presentation: Case Studies in Social Policy
   - June 21
     - Class Presentation: Strategies for Social Policy Change

3. Frameworks and Context for Understanding Social Policy
   - June 28
     - Class Presentation: Policy Process and Implementation

Date | Main Topic of Unit | Date | Main Topic of Unit
--- | --- | --- | ---
June 2 | Overview of the Course | June 14 | Class Presentation: Case Studies in Social Policy
June 28 | Class Presentation: Policy Process and Implementation |
Tools for Analyzing and Influencing Social Policy

**Main topic of unit:**

Tools for Determining Need and Analyzing Social Policy

**Work to be completed before class:**

*Policy Practice Module 1:*

Define and document problems and needs

*Worksheet:*

translate client issues into policy initiatives (diagnosis and evaluation)

**Readings:**

Text, Chapter 5, Tools for Determining Need and Analyzing Social Policy

**What you will learn to do:**

June 1

**Mid-term Exam**

Social Welfare Policy in Major Fields of Practice:

Poverty, civil rights protections, child welfare, health and mental health, older adults

**Work to be completed before class:**

*Worksheet:*

program and housing subsidies

**Readings:**

Text, Chapter 6, Social Policy Development and Policy Practice

**What you will learn to do:**

June 21/23

Social Policy Development and Policy Practice

What are the steps in policy development? What skills are needed for successful policy practice?

**Work to be completed before class:**

*Worksheet:*

Policy Practice Module 2:

Translate client issues into policy initiatives (identify and evaluate policy alternatives)

**Readings:**

Text, Chapter 6, Social Policy Development and Policy Practice

**What you will learn to do:**

June 28

**Mid-term Exam**

Poverty and Social Assistance Programs

Universal and selective income support programs and housing subsidies.

**Work to be completed before class:**

*Worksheet:*

Analyze Social Policy

How is policy analysis conducted? A framework for policy analysis: policy goals, benefits/services, eligibility rules, service delivery systems, programs, and outcomes. The framework for policy analysis and assessing need and analyzing social policy needs and planning policy.

**Readings:**

Text, Chapter 6, Tools for Determining Need and Analyzing Social Policy

**What you will learn to do:**

June 30
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Main Topic of Unit</th>
<th>Work to Be Completed Before Class</th>
<th>What You Will Learn To Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 5/7</td>
<td>Civil Rights Protections for Disenfranchised Groups: People with disabilities, racial/ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, women, and the elderly.</td>
<td>READINGS: Text, Chapter 7</td>
<td>Policies Targeting Older Adults: Home and community-based support, retirement and pension, and income services, health care, long-term care.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 19/21</td>
<td>Health and Mental Health Policies and Programs: ~ Coverage for the employed, the poor, and persons with mental illness and development disabilities.</td>
<td>WORKSHEET Policy Practice Module 6: Apply the claims making process</td>
<td>Synthesize the various policy analysis components into a policy position paper, e.g., an op-ed. Edward W. Wiener, Civil Rights, Health and Mental Health Policies and Programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 26</td>
<td>Policies Targeting Older Adults: Home and community-based services, health care, long-term care.</td>
<td>POLICY PRACTICE MODULE Policy Practice Portfolio presentations</td>
<td>Prepare a client advocacy plan for older adults. Edward W. Wiener, Civil Rights, Health and Mental Health Policies and Programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 28</td>
<td>POLICY PRACTICE PORTFOLIO FINAL EXAM</td>
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VII. Classroom and University Policies

Classroom Policies

School of Social Work Grading Policy and Course Grading Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 - 94</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>93 - 90</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>89 - 87</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>86 - 84</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>83 - 80</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>79 - 77</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>73 - 70</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>63 - 60</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>59 &amp; below</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

SUPERIOR WORK (A): The assignment significantly exceeds expectations listed in the syllabus and demonstrates in-depth critical thinking/analysis (e.g., coherent integration of ideas, well-developed ideas).

GOOD WORK (B): The assignment meets all the requirements & demonstrates in-depth critical thinking/analysis.

AVERAGE WORK (C): The assignment meets the requirements or has minor gaps but fails to demonstrate in-depth critical thinking/analysis.

Below AVERAGE WORK (≤D): The assignment has important gaps: does not meet the requirements or fails to demonstrate in-depth critical thinking/analysis.

Use of Blackboard in Class
This course uses Blackboard, a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at [http://courses.utexas.edu](http://courses.utexas.edu). Blackboard 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 Blackboard course site regularly for class work and announcements. Students can find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk by calling 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please plan accordingly.

Classroom Etiquette
Punctuality and attentiveness while others are speaking are expected. Cell phones must be put away during class and computers turned off (except when used as part of assigned in-class activities). Students who use gizmos for non-class related activities will be marked absent and asked to leave for the remainder of that class.

Late Work
All assignments submitted after the beginning of class are considered late. Student presentations can only be given on the allotted dates. Penalty for late assignments: 20 points per day. Late exams will be penalized at least 20 points (except in the case of pre-approved, documented emergencies). Films shown in class are not available for individual viewing (with the exception of limited films available at the SSW LRC).

Style Manual and Proper Credit
The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* is the style manual used by the School of Social Work. It provides guidelines for formatting papers and referencing sources. To avoid plagiarism, you must correctly cite your sources when using words or ideas that are not your own. When you use exact quotes, use quotation marks and cite the source. Give credit as well when using someone else’s ideas, even if you reword the idea.

University Notices and Policies
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.

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.

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/).

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/.

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.

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.
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.

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.

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 in writing during the first week of class.
• In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
• 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.

VIII. Bibliography


