

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
STEVE HICKS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Course Number: SW382R	Instructor's Name: Terrence T. Allen
Unique Number: 61325	Office Number: 3.130D
Semester: Spring 2018	Office Phone: (512) 232-4420
Meeting Time: Tue: 5:30-8:30 PM	Email: <a href="mailto:tallen@austin.utexas.edu">tallen@austin.utexas.edu</a>
Place: Room 2.118	
Office Hours: Mon, Tue & Wed: 4:00-5:15 PM and by Appointment	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Course Description ..... p. 1 II. Course Objectives .....p. 1 III. Teaching Methods .....p. 2 IV. Required Reading Materials p. 2 V. Course Requirements .....p. 2 VI. Course Schedule ..... p. 3	<b>Assignments</b> A. Social Problems and Implications.p.4 B. Policy Analysis Paper.....p.4 C. Letter to Editor.....p.4 D. Policy Laboratory ..... p.5	VII. Class Policies ..... p.5
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**Social Policy Analysis and Problems**

**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**

Upon completion of this course you will be able to:

1. Understand the dominant historical themes that have shaped social welfare policy in the United States
2. Understand the economic and political constraints and opportunities in the development of social welfare problems and policies
3. Understand the relationship between the history of the social work profession and the development of social welfare policy
4. Apply social work values to critically analyze social problems
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
6. Understand social welfare policy arenas impacting service delivery, social work practice, and attainment of individual and social well-being
7. Understand how social policies differentially affect diverse populations in American society

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.

### **EPAS Competencies**

The Steve Hicks 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, the UT SHSSW engages in ongoing curriculum assessment to demonstrate compliance with CSWE's Education Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

**Using a common evaluation instrument, this course measures the implementation of knowledge, skills, values, and/or cognitive and affective processes to assess the following competencies:**

### **Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice**

Outcome 5.1: Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services

Outcome 5.2: Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services

Outcome 5.3: Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice

## **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 instructors and teaching assistants during office hours.

## **IV. Required Reading Material**

There are assigned readings that will be posted each week.

The assigned readings for this course represent the minimum required reading for this course.

## **V. Course Requirements**

Course requirements consist of: social problem paper, policy analysis paper, letter to the editor, television policy discussion critique and policy laboratory activities. Course requirements, due dates and their contribution to the final grade are summarized below. Please note that all writing assignments with the exception of the letter to editor assignment must include sub-headings and must adhere to the APA writing format. Also assignments will be submitted electronically before midnight on the due date.

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>% of Course Grade</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Television Policy Critique	15%	February 6th
Social Problem Paper	25%	February 27th
Social Welfare Policy Analysis	30%	April 17th
Letter to the Editor	5%	May 1 <sup>th</sup>
Policy Laboratory	25%	

Grades for this course will be assigned using the following +/- scale.

94 and above = A	80.0 to 83.999 = B-
90.0 to 93.999 = A-	77.0 to 79.999 = C+
87.0 to 89.999 = B+	74.0 to 76.999 = C
84.0 to 86.999 = B	70.0 to 73.999 = C-
67.0 to 69.999 = D+	60.0 to 63.999 = D-
64.0 to 66.999 = D	Below 60 = F

Each course requirement is described in detail below. However, you may still have questions about the assignments. If this is the case, please feel free to ask for clarification at any time during the course. You may ask for clarification during my office hours or you can ask questions at the beginning of each class session.

## VI. Course Schedule

<b>Week</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
I Jan 16	Course Introduction	
II Jan 23	Definitions and Important Concepts, Values and Institutions	Power Point Presentation
III Jan 30	Social Welfare Policy Analysis Framework	Power Point Presentation Classroom Exercise
IV February 6	Policy Development	Assigned Readings <b>Television Policy Critique Paper Due</b>
V February 13	Discrimination and Poverty in America	Assigned Readings
VI February 20	Religion and Social Welfare	Assigned Readings
VII February 27	Tax and Income Distribution	Assigned Readings Guest Speaker: <b>Social Problem Paper Due</b>
VIII March 6	Social Insurance and Public Assistance	Assigned Readings
IX March 13	<b>Spring Break</b>	
X March 20	Immigration	Assigned Readings Guest Speaker
XI March 27	Criminal Justice/Juvenile Justice	Assigned Readings
XII April 3	Child Welfare	Assigned Readings
XIII April 10	American Healthcare System	Assigned Readings

XIV April 17	Education	Assigned Readings Guest Speaker: <b>Policy Analysis Paper Due</b>
XV April 24	American Welfare State in International Perspective	Assigned Readings
XVI May 1	<b>Policy Lab</b>	<b>Letter to the Editor Assignment Due</b>

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## Course Assignments

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### A. Social Problem Paper (25 points)

You will write a 5-7 page critical analysis of a social problem and policies related to that problem. The analysis will be written from a historical perspective and will include from the student's perspective its impact on American society. The paper should include but is not limited to:

- a. Description of the problem?
- b. The cause of the problem and its impact on today's society
- c. Relevant policies related to the problem
- d. Student's perspective of the problem

### B. Social Welfare Policy Analysis Paper (30 points)

You will write a 7-10 page analysis of a social welfare policy. Using a general policy analysis framework the paper will include the following:

- a. The historical background of the policy
- b. The problems that necessitate the policy
- c. Policy description
- d. Policy Analysis

### C. Letter to the Editor (5 points)

You will write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper. The letter should be focused on a current problem or social issue that you want to voice your opinion. It should be approximately 150 words and follow the format of the example provided. You will submit the letter electronically and provide a hard copy to the instructor with evidence attached to it that it was sent to the editor.

### D. Television Policy Critique (15 points)

You will select a cable news program i.e., CNN, MSNBC, FNC, ETC... and write a 5-7 page paper (Not including the cover page) that conforms to APA writing format. You will observe a policy/issue focused discussion that involves at least three people and critique the merits of the discussion. On the cover page you should note the discussion topic, date of

broadcast, time, network, and program host. In your critique you will note the following:

1. The principal position of all participants involved in the discussion. In other words, discuss if they are generally for or against the policy/issue discussed.
2. Discuss a distinguishing aspect of each participant's position. While they may share the same position it may be for different reasons and from a different perspective.
3. Discuss the political implications of the discussion. In other words, to what extent does political affiliation influence participants' position?
4. You will take a position on the merits of the policy/issue and discuss how if at all how the discussion influenced your position.

### **E. Policy Laboratory (25)**

The practice laboratory is an educational tool used to give you practice experience. It will also allow you to understand specific concepts related to social policy development, analysis and implementation. Each week you and your group members will engage in exercises related to the topic of discussion for that week. Non-participation including absences will result in a two point deduction.

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## **VII. Class Policies**

**CONDITIONAL ADMISSION.** Students who were admitted into the MSSW program on a conditional basis are not able to take an incomplete for this course if the conditions for admission are still in place.

**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 as 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 SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION.** Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and other forms of electronic communication (i.e. blogs, etc.) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image. Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including any information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in any way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

**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://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>).

**USE OF CLASS MATERIALS.** The materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, exams, quizzes, and homework assignments are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized copying of the class materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary actions being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of class materials without the specific, expressed approval of the instructor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of sharing those materials with other current or future students.

**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,

**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 are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

#### References

- Armador, Xavier, Ph. D. (2000). "I am Not Sick I Don't Need Help! Helping the Seriously Mentally Ill Accept Treatment. A Practical Guide for Families and Therapists". Peconic, NY: Vida Press
- Center of Mental Health Services, *Medical Necessity in Private Health Plans: Implications for Behavioral Health Care*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), 2003).
- Center of Mental Health Services, *The Provision of Mental Health Services in Managed Care Organizations*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (DHHS), 2003).
- Collins, Jim. (2001). "Good To Eat: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Other's Don't". New York, NY.: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.
- DiNitto, M. Diana. (2004) 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Social Welfare, Policies and Public Practice." Allyn & Bacon
- Ellis, Rodney A. (2003). "Impacting Social Policy, A Practitioners Guide to Analysis And Action". Thompson, Brooks/Cole.
- Evans, Katie and J. Michael Sullivan. (1990). "Dual Diagnosis: A Guide for Counselors And Case Managers." New York, NY: Guilford Publications, Inc.
- Fawcett, B. Stephen, Ph. D. (2000). "Promoting Health for All." University of Kansas.
- Haynes, S. Karen; Michelson, S. James (2003) 5<sup>th</sup> ed. "Affecting Change: Social Workers in the Political Arena." Allyn & Bacon
- Nasar, Sylvia. (2001). "A Beautiful Mind: The Life of Mathematical Genius and Nobel Laureate John Nash." New York, NY.: Touchstone.
- Mechanic, David. (1999). Mental Health and Social Policy; The Emergence of Managed Care. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Allyn & Bacon.
- Popple & Leighninger. (2004). 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, "The Policy-Based Profession: An Introduction to Social Welfare Policy Analysis." Allyn & Bacon.
- "Preventing Drug Use among Children and Adolescents" A Research Guides. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2003). 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. NIH Pub No. 04-4212 (B). Publication.
- Public Health, Strategic Planning Outline.
- Rae, Ann; Wanda Nicholas-Wolosuk. (2003). "Changing Social Policy, an Incremental Approach." Allyn & Bacon.
- Rosen, Laura Epstein and Xavier Francisco Amador. (1997). "When Someone You Love is Depressed: How to Help Your Loved One Without Losing Yourself." New York, NY.: Fireside.

#### **XI. Online Policy and Other Sites**

Administration on Aging: [aoa.gov](http://aoa.gov)

Administration for Children and Families: [acf.gov](http://acf.gov)

Agency for Health Care Research and Quality : [ahrq.gov](http://ahrq.gov)

Bureau of Labor Statistics: bls.gov

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: cbpp.org

Centers for Disease Control: cdc.gov

Center for Law and Social Policy: clasp.org

Center for Mental Health Services: mentalhealth.gov.

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention: samhsa.gov/csap

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment: samhsa.gov/csat

Children's Defense Fund: childrensdefence.org

Congressional Budget Office: cbo.gov

Department of Health and Human Services: hhs.gov

Executive Office of the President: whitehouse.gov

Food and Drug Administration: fda.gov

Health Care Financing Administration : hcfa.gov

Health Resources and Services Administration: hrsa.gov

Indian Health Services: HIS.GOV

Knowledge Exchange Network: [hen@mentalhealth.org](mailto:hen@mentalhealth.org)

Legislation (Current bills): <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Legislation (previous laws): <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/bdquery/html>

Legislation (copies of historical laws): <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/const/mdbquery.html>

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill: nami.org

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors: nashpd.org

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

National Institute of Health: nih.gov

National Institute of Drug Abuse: nida.nih.gov/NIDAhome1.html

National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: niaaa.nih.gov/



National Institute of Mental Health: [nimh.nih.gov/home.cfm](http://nimh.nih.gov/home.cfm)

Office of Managed Care: [mentalhealth.org/cmhs/managedcare](http://mentalhealth.org/cmhs/managedcare)

Office of National Drug Control Policy: (1) [whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/](http://whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/) (2) [whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/policy/papers](http://whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/policy/papers)

Rand Drug Abuse Policy Research Center: [rand.org/centers/dprc](http://rand.org/centers/dprc)

Robert Wood Johnson Substance Abuse Policy Research Center:

[Phs.bgsm.edu/sshp/rwj/rwj.htm](http://Phs.bgsm.edu/sshp/rwj/rwj.htm)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: [samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov)

Texas Department of Health: [tdh.state.tx.us](http://tdh.state.tx.us)

Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation: [tmhmr.state.tx.us](http://tmhmr.state.tx.us)

Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse: [tcada.state.tx.us](http://tcada.state.tx.us)

Texas Health and Human Services Commission: [hhsc.state.tx.us](http://hhsc.state.tx.us)

Texas Legislation On-line: <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us>

The Brookings Institution: [brook.edu](http://brook.edu)

The Electronic Policy Network: [epn.org](http://epn.org)

The Urban Institute: [urban.org](http://urban.org)

U.S. Census Bureau: [census.gov](http://census.gov)

Welfare Information Network: [welfareinfo.org](http://welfareinfo.org)

## **X. Online Policy Sites**

For a list of links to many policy-related sites: [www.newyorkwired.com/sspolicy.htm](http://www.newyorkwired.com/sspolicy.htm)

Department of Health and Human Services: [hhs.gov](http://hhs.gov)

Administration for Children and Families: [acf.gov](http://acf.gov)

Administration on Aging: [aoa.gov](http://aoa.gov)

Agency for Health Care Research and Quality: [ahrq.gov](http://ahrq.gov)

Centers for Disease Control: [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: [cms.hhs.gov](http://cms.hhs.gov)

Food and Drug Administration: [fda.gov](http://fda.gov)

Health Resources and Services Administration: [hrsa.gov](http://hrsa.gov)

Indian Health Services: [his.gov](http://his.gov)

Executive Office of the President: [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov)

Families USA: The Voice for Health Care Consumers (good resource for Medicaid Information): [familiesusa.org](http://familiesusa.org)

Future of Children (good research on child welfare and health): [futureofchildren.org](http://futureofchildren.org)

Office of National Drug Control Policy: (1) [whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/](http://whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/) (2) [whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/policy/papers](http://whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/policy/papers)

Legislation (Current bills): <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Legislation (previous laws): <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/bdquery.html>

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill: [nih.gov](http://nih.gov)

National Institutes of Health: [nih.gov](http://nih.gov)

National Institute of Drug Abuse: [nida.nih.gov/NIDAhome1.html](http://nida.nih.gov/NIDAhome1.html)

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: [niaaa.nih.gov](http://niaaa.nih.gov)

National Institute of Mental Health: [nimh.nih.gov/home.cfm](http://nimh.nih.gov/home.cfm)

President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health: [mentalhealthcommission.gov/](http://mentalhealthcommission.gov/)

Rand Drug Abuse Policy Research Center: [rand.org/centers/dprc](http://rand.org/centers/dprc)

Robert Wood Johnson Substance Abuse Policy Research Center: [phs.bgsm.edu/sshp/rwj/rwj.htm](http://phs.bgsm.edu/sshp/rwj/rwj.htm)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: [samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov)

Center for Mental Health Services: [mentalhealth.gov](http://mentalhealth.gov)

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention: [samhsa.gov/csap](http://samhsa.gov/csap)

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment: [samhsa.gov/csat](http://samhsa.gov/csat)

Knowledge Exchange Network: [ken@mentalhealth.org](mailto:ken@mentalhealth.org)

Office of Managed Care: [mentalhealth.org/cmhm/managedcare](http://mentalhealth.org/cmhm/managedcare)

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors: [nashpd.org](http://nashpd.org)

National Mental Health Association: [nmha.org](http://nmha.org)

National Mental Health Information Center: The Center for Mental Health Services:  
[mentalhealth.org/cmhs/ManagedCare/resource](http://mentalhealth.org/cmhs/ManagedCare/resource)

Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation: [tmhmr.state.tx.us](http://tmhmr.state.tx.us)

Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse: [tcada.state.tx.us](http://tcada.state.tx.us)

Texas Health and Human Services Commission: [hhsc.state.tx.us](http://hhsc.state.tx.us)

Texas Department of Health: [tdh.state.tx.us](http://tdh.state.tx.us)