

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
STEVE HICKS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

<b>Course Number:</b>	SW n382R	<b>Instructor:</b>	Alison Mohr Boleware, LMSW (she/her)
<b>Unique Number:</b>	88210	<b>Email:</b>	Alison.boleware@austin.utexas.edu
<b>Semester:</b>	Spring 2025	<b>Office:</b>	Lake Austin Center, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor
<b>Meeting Time/Place:</b>	Tuesdays/Thursdays	<b>Office Phone:</b>	512-471-2988
	1:30-4:00 PM	<b>Office Hours:</b>	By appointment only.
	BEN 1.124		

**Social Policy Analysis & Social Problems**

**I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

Historical perspective on the development of social welfare institutions, programs, and policies. Students study methods of current policy analysis, evaluation of social problems, and advocacy for policy change. Three lecture hours a week for one semester. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in social work, or graduate standing and consent of instructor or the graduate adviser.

**II. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Using anti-oppressive and antiracist lenses, this course critically examines, from both historical and current perspectives, the overall structure of the American social welfare system. The course also considers the parallel historical development of the social work profession, including the ways in which it has responded to social problems through social welfare policy, advocacy, policy practice, and policy evaluation. Emphasis is placed on the disparate social, economic, environmental, and political barriers experienced by marginalized populations and strategies to address them. A variety of theories and frameworks with an anti-oppressive and antiracist focus will anchor student learning. Students will develop knowledge, values, and skills needed to critically evaluate social policy and advocate for change. Course content also emphasizes the disproportionate impact of policy on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities who hold intersecting marginalized social identities and how to engage them in the policy process.

**III. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES**

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

1. Identify, analyze, and critique social policies, policy decision-making, and implementation at the local, state, federal, and global levels that affect individual and

community well-being, emphasizing the impact on marginalized populations and relationship to structural barriers that impede access to social services;

2. Develop policy analysis and advocacy skills, such as creation of a policy campaign and a policy brief, that incorporate antiracist and anti-oppressive strategies including collaboration with individual, group, organization, and community stakeholders disproportionately impacted by these policies and systems;
3. Critically evaluate the links between historical and current contexts of power, privilege, racism, and oppression within institutions and the intergenerational impact on marginalized groups with emphasis on social, racial, cultural, economic, technological, organizational, and environmental influences that impact social policy;
4. Analyze, formulate, and advocate for social welfare policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice;
5. Through comparison of U.S. social policies and practices to those of other countries using resources such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, assess the relative impact of global human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice;
6. Apply the NASW Code of Ethics and frameworks of ethical decision-making, including reflection on one's own positionality, in policy practice including policy analysis and advocacy.

### **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**

Behavior 5a: Use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of and access to social services.

Behavior 5b: Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

## **IV. TEACHING METHODS**

This course is meant to prepare you to engage in policy practice as a social worker. Each week will have a theme, with related content and activities. Each student brings their own experiences, preferences and strengths, so many opportunities will be provided for student interaction and robust conversation. As such, we will utilize the following to simulate a working policy environment from a social work lens through these primary teaching/learning approaches:

- Discussion-Based Learning: guest speakers, class discussions, and Liberating Structure exercises to ensure all voices are heard
- Experiential Learning: small group activities, modelling, and practical exercises
- Learning policy practice skills: assignments, presentations, and materials

Canvas will serve as the learning platform for this course, including communication between students and the course instructor. The course Canvas site can be accessed at <http://courses.utexas.edu> or the Social Work web page (requires Internet connection and computer UT EID and password). The Help Desk available through the UT home page ([www.utexas.edu/its/help](http://www.utexas.edu/its/help)) or at 475-9400 is available to assist students with Canvas-related questions.

## V. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

In hopes of creating a more equitable class environment, there will be no required textbook and no content will require payment to obtain. This course uses a variety of materials that will be available through Canvas in advance, including academic articles, news articles, podcasts, and videos. Some of the materials include personal opinions of the hosts and guests and belong to the host and guests alone.

All materials will be available through Canvas in advance of the class and students are encouraged to review materials prior to each class. As a masters level class, it is expected that you come prepared to class having read all of the materials and ready for meaningful discussion.

## VI. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### **Assignment #1: Local, State, or Federal Policy One Pager (15%)**

Each student will provide a one pager on a local, state, or federal policy one pager to present in class for an interactive discussion that aligns with the class topic. Due dates will vary based on class topics. Detailed instructions will be available on Canvas.

### **Assignment #2: Documentary or Podcast Paper (20%)**

Each student will watch a documentary or listen to a podcast and answer a set of questions. Detailed instructions will be available on Canvas.

### **Assignment #3: Social Policy Op-Ed (25%)\***

Each student will write an op-ed on a social policy topic of their choice. Detailed instructions and examples will be available on Canvas.

### **Assignment #4: Comprehensive Social Policy Group Presentation (30%)**

Students will work in assigned groups to create a comprehensive presentation over a social policy. The presentation will analyze a current event through the critical lens of a policy social worker and offer local, state, and federal policy analysis of related existing policies, along with a historical perspective of the issue. Detailed instructions and examples will be available on Canvas.

### **Assignment #5: End of Semester Self Reflection Paper (10%)**

Self-awareness and reflection is essential to engaging in the policy space as a social worker. Each student will draft a reflection paper using the prompt on Canvas.

### **\*Common Course Assignment for MSSW Foundation Policy Course**

#### **Opinion Editorial (Op-ed)**

This assignment is designated as the “common assignment” for this course. Students in all sections of this course are required to complete this assignment, which is used to assess student mastery of competency 5 (Engage in Policy Practice) from CSWE’s Educational Policy Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

Each student will write an opinion editorial related to the policy topic chosen by their policy advocacy group.

#### **Background information**

Opinion editorials, or "op-eds," are short commentary pieces. An op-ed is an excellent way to communicate your message and advocate directly to a broad audience. Op-eds can be a useful tool for advocates to raise awareness about important social welfare policy issues and to promote the need for specific changes in policies at the local, state, national, or global levels. Op-eds appear each day in almost every newspaper and address current issues, express a viewpoint, and frequently offer policy or other solutions to social problems. If published in newspapers, elected officials and other decision makers, opinion leaders, and a wide range of community members may read them.

#### **Instructions**

Your op-ed should meet the following guidelines as articulated in the Council on Social Work Education’s 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS):

Competency 5: “Engage in policy practice”:

- Behavior 5a: Use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of and access to social services.
- Behavior 5b: Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

You should use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses while crafting your op-ed piece. Your op-ed should offer viable policy alternatives to improve human well-being and suggest actions that policymakers and/or members of the public should take to address the issues that you address in your op-ed.

Class time will be dedicated to teaching students how to write a traditional op-ed piece, and students will be provided resources to assist in the process. Examples will also be provided of editorials and commentaries in electronic formats. Students may submit their editorial in traditional, written form or in video or another electronic format. If you chose to write a traditional op-ed, it should be 500 to 750 words, single spaced. If you chose an electronic format, the number of words you use in written or spoken form should

probably be similar and the op-ed should not exceed 3 or 4 minutes (depending on factors such as your use of graphics). Be sure your op-ed is based on solid evidence and sources and that you cite sources in a manner appropriate to an editorial.

Students may choose to submit their op-ed pieces to an appropriate media source for potential publication. If you do, be sure that you check the guidelines for submission, as they vary from publication to publication.

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage of Grade
<b>Assignment #1:</b> Local, State, or Federal Social Policy One Pager	Varies by student	15%
<b>Assignment #2:</b> Documentary or Podcast Paper	6/26/25	20%
<b>Assignment #3:</b> Social Policy Op-Ed	7/10/25	25%
<b>Assignment #4:</b> Comprehensive Social Policy Group Presentation	7/29/25	30%
<b>Assignment #5:</b> Reflection Paper	7/31/25	10%

## VII. GRADES

[No A+]	87.0 to 89.999	B+	77.0 to 79.999	C+	67.0 to 69.999	D+
94.0 and Above	A	84.0 to 86.999	B	74.0 to 76.999	C*	D
90.0 to 93.999	A-	80.0 to 83.999	B-	70.0 to 73.999	C-	D-
			<i>*minimum to pass course</i>		Below 60.0	F

## VII. CLASS POLICIES

- **Class Agreement:** On the first day of class, we will decide on our Class Agreement for respectful engagement and collaboration. Each student is expected to abide by the agreement throughout the semester. If anything comes up regarding the agreement, please reach out to me to discuss.
- **Respectful Dialogue:** This class depends on meaningful discussion of reading material and students' critical thinking and "learning in public". Students' analytical thoughts and respectful opinions are welcome, but disrespectful language will not be tolerated. Students are expected to participate in co-creating the Class Agreement during the first class, and hold each other accountable to those ground rules.
- **Health & Wellbeing:** Some subjects in this class could be triggering or hard to hear. Please practice meaningful self-care and lean on supportive resources when needed. More information is found in the University Policies section of the syllabus.
- **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 through Canvas.

- **Electronic devices:** Electronic devices are welcome to support your learning, not for other activities. Please be mindful that they do not serve as a distraction to you or those around you.
- **Breaks:** Each class will have a 15-minute break during the class, exact time will depend on class material and speaker availability.
- **Attendance:** Your presence is necessary for everyone's success in this course. You are allowed to miss three class meetings. Any absence after the third may impact your engagement with content and ideas shared in class, so I encourage you to remember this. Please be proactive in situations where you will be absent, if you experience an emergency, or anticipate a prolonged absence for any reason.
- **Bonus points:** There will be opportunities to receive bonus points throughout the semester, including attending virtual and in-person events.
- **Classroom Maintenance:** Please dispose of trash and return chairs and desks before leaving the classroom.

## VIII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

**Attendance and Academic Behavior.** At the University of Texas at Austin, regular attendance at all class meetings is expected. Instructors are responsible for implementing an attendance policy and must notify students of any special attendance requirements. See more information at <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/attendance/>. Furthermore, students are expected to abide by the Standards for Social Work Education (available at <https://socialwork.utexas.edu/student-resources/bsw/policies-and-procedures/>). The student shows potential for responsible and accountable behavior by being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, and keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements.

**Religious Holy Days.** A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable period after the absence. A reasonable accommodation does not include substantial modification to academic standards, or adjustments of requirements essential to any program of instruction. Students and instructors who have questions or concerns about academic accommodations for religious observance or religious beliefs may contact the Center for Access and Restorative Engagement at <https://community.utexas.edu/care/>. The University does not maintain a list of religious holy days.

**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.

**Policy on Academic Integrity.** Students who violate University rules on academic 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 academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>.

**Use of Course Materials.** The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor 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 sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to other current or future students.

**University Electronic Mail Student Notification.** Electronic mail (email), like postal mail, is a mechanism for official University communication to students. The University will exercise the right to send email communications to all students, and the University will expect that email communications will be received and read in a timely manner. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <https://it.utexas.edu/policies/university-electronic-mail-student-notification-policy>.

## **Steve Hicks School of Social Work Policies**

---

**Professional Conduct and Civility in the Classroom.** 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. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as race, ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. This atmosphere includes working intentionally to recognize and dismantle racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism in the classroom. Social Work also deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues. In this environment, we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

**Classroom Confidentiality.** Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

**Unanticipated Distress.** Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the professor. The professor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what

kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center at 512-471-3515 or online at <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>.

**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 (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other forms of electronic communication (e.g. blogs) 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.

## **Resources, Prevention of Discrimination, and Safety**

---

**Disability Accommodation Statement.** If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). You may refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: <https://community.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and how they apply in my class.

**Behavior Concerns and Covid-19 Advice Line (BCCAL).** If students have concerns about their behavioral health, or if they are concerned about the behavioral health of someone else, students may use the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns. This service is provided through a partnership between 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 <https://safety.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line>. The Behavior Concerns and

COVID-19 Advice Line has been expanded to support The University of Texas at Austin community during the COVID-19 pandemic. By calling 512-232-5050 - Option 2 for COVID-19, students, faculty and staff can be assisted in English and Spanish with COVID-19 support.

**Covid-19 Related Information.** The University's policies and practices related to the pandemic may be accessed at: <https://protect.utexas.edu/>

**Title IX Reporting.** In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct on the basis of sex <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>. Faculty, field instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking, dating violence, or any other forms of sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>.

**Title IX Accommodations for Those Pregnant, Nursing and Parenting.** Pregnant, nursing and parenting students, faculty, and staff are eligible for accommodations through the Title IX Office that support equal access to education and work and prevent discrimination. Students may reach out to the Title IX Office for help with accommodations to make up missed classes, complete missed coursework, keep them safe in the classroom, apply for leaves of absence, receive priority registration and other related support. Faculty and staff, including undergraduate students who work on campus and graduate student employees, may reach out for assistance with job or schedule restructuring and obtaining modified or additional work equipment. Visit the [Title IX pregnancy and parenting resource page](#) for more information or contact the [Title IX Support and Resources team](#) connect with a Case Manager.

**Campus Carry Policy.** The University's policy on campus carry may be found here: <https://campuscarry.utexas.edu>.

**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.

**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 in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering 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.

## IX. COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>June 5</b>	<b>Welcome! Syllabus and Intros</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Module 1
<b>June 10</b>	<i>No Class</i>	<b>n/a</b>	Module 2
<b>June 12</b>	<b>Policy Basics, Poverty, and Welfare</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Module 3
<b>June 17</b>	<b>Food Insecurity &amp; Housing</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Module 4
<b>June 19</b>	<i>No Class - Holiday</i>	<b>n/a</b>	n/a
<b>June 24</b>	<b>Recovery, Harm Reduction, Mental Health, and Substance Use</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Module 5
<b>June 26</b>	<b>LGBTQIA+ Rights</b>	<b>Documentary or Podcast Paper Due</b>	Module 6
<b>July 1</b>	<b>Medicaid, Medicare, Healthcare Access, and Non-Medical Drivers of Health</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Module 7
<b>July 3</b>	<i>No Class – Holiday</i>	<b>n/a</b>	
<b>July 8</b>	<b>Voting Rights</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Module 8

<b>July 10</b>	<b>Disability Rights &amp; Disability Justice</b>	<b>Social Policy Op-Ed Due</b>	Module 9
<b>July 15</b>	<b>Policing, Prisons, and Criminal Justice</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Module 10
<b>July 17</b>	<b>Child Welfare &amp; Juvenile Justice</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Module 11
<b>July 22</b>	<b>Social Policy and the Law</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Module 12
<b>July 24</b>	<b>Immigration, Refugees, and Asylees</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Module 13
<b>July 29</b>	<b>All Group Project Presentations</b>	<b>Comprehensive Social Policy Presentations Due</b>	n/a
<b>July 31</b>		<b>End of Semester Self Reflection Due</b>	

## **X. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Barnard Center for Research on Women. My Body Doesn't Oppress Me, Society Does.

Castillo, A. Texas Center for Justice and Equity. Finish the 5: Our Journey to Zero Youth Prisons in Texas.

Centre for Public Impact. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in the US

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. What is health equity?

Crip Justice homepage

Doin' the Work. Voting & Legislative Advocacy – Dawn Brown, MSW

Feeding America: Hunger and Food Insecurity

Hair, N.L, et. al. (2015) Association of Child Poverty, Brain Development, and Academic Achievement

Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health.

Hogg Foundation for Mental Health (January 2025). A guide to understanding mental health systems and services in Texas, 6<sup>th</sup> edition.

Into the Fold. On the Defensive: How Policy Changes Impact Queer Mental Health.

Kaiser Family Foundation. An Overview of Medicare.

Medina, C. & Gruberg, S. Improving the Lives and Rights of LGBTQ People in America: A Road Map for the Biden Administration

Murphy, K. Texans Care for Children. Racial Justice Requires Improvements to the Texas CPS System.

National Alliance to End Homelessness. State of Homelessness: 2024 Edition.

National Consortium on Leadership and Disability for Youth. Disability History Timeline: Resource and Discussion Guide.

Reamer, F. G. *Social Work and Criminal Justice, The Uneasy Alliance.*

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's Working Definition of Recovery.

The Texas Tribune. The Texas Legislature, Explained: Voting Restrictions

The Uncertain Hour: The Magic Bureaucrat (Season 1, Episode)

The Uncertain Hour: White Gloves, Aluminum Cans and Plasma (Season 1, Episode 2)