University of Minnesota School of Social Work  
Syllabus  

SW 5801-Policies and Programs in American Social Welfare  

Part I: Course information  

SW 5801-Policies and Programs in American Social Welfare  
2 credits  

Faculty contact:  
Name:  
Email:  
Phone:  
Office Location:  

Course descriptions:  

Short version:  
Introduces major policies and programs of social welfare, distinguishing between programs of social insurance and public assistance. Develops skills for analyzing social problems and the policies that respond to those problems. Introduces concepts for defining and measuring poverty and social disparity.  

Long version:  
Contrasting approaches to the welfare state are examined within their historical contexts. Students learn a process for identifying, defining, and examining social problems, paying attention to how social values/ideologies shape the articulation of problems. Students learn a framework for analyzing social welfare policies, and apply that framework to a social welfare policy of their choice. The framework introduces elements essential to all social welfare policies, and examines forms these elements might take, considering social values that influence choices and the fit of the policy to an identified social problem.  

Students also learn the broad outline of the American social welfare policies, contrasting programs of social insurance and public assistance. Theories on the causes of poverty, along with challenges in defining and measuring poverty, are explored. Students examine the impact of social welfare policies on population subgroups, particularly on those who experience economic, social and political marginalization, or who have been historically oppressed.  

Clinical Licensure Hours:
This course contains some clinical content, as required by the Minnesota Board of Social Work for eligibility for the Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW). The number of hours in each required category is listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Differential Diagnosis</th>
<th>Assessment based treatment planning</th>
<th>Clinical Intervention Methods</th>
<th>Evaluation methodologies</th>
<th>SW values and ethics</th>
<th>Culturally specific clinical assessment</th>
<th>Other areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part II: Course outcomes**

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this course, students are able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the role of social welfare policy in creating a just society, through the consideration of contemporary policies, programs and issues related to social welfare and social justice.

- Identify and define a social problem, and apply an analytical framework to the policy(ies) that address the problem in order to assess whether the policy is good, and whether it addresses the identified social problem.

- Demonstrate understanding of the social welfare system in the United States through knowledge of policies and programs of social insurance, public assistance, and distinguishing among public and private provision.

- Provide conceptual and operational definitions of poverty, including changing notions of poverty over time as they relate to social, political and economic contexts.

- Articulate how poverty is measured in the United States, and to identify challenges and dilemmas in defining and measuring poverty.

- Understand and articulate causal theories and factors associated with poverty, particularly as these relate to population sub-groups.

- Understand and analyze critically the ways in which the oppression and powerlessness of populations at risk are initiated and maintained through social policies and programs, as well as the ways in which such groups initiate, change or create alternatives to policy in ways that promote social justice.

- Explore, access and use a range of Internet-based resources available for studying, understanding and analyzing social welfare policies and programs.
• Describe the roles and demonstrate the skills that social workers and the profession can/should take in the development of social welfare policy.

Social Work Practice Competencies
Successful completion of this foundation course implies that the student has achieved competency in the following practice behaviors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Behavior</th>
<th>Covered in class through (i.e., activity, reading, content)</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts | Policy Module 2 – Tools for Problem Analysis  
Policy Module 3 – Tools for Policy analysis | Social Policy study paper |

**Competency: 2.1.2 – Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice**
Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of the profession, its ethical standards, and relevant law. Social workers:

**• Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom**
Policy Module 5 – investigating poverty on the Internet | Social policy study paper |

**• Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention and evaluation**
In-class exercises on problem and policy analysis  
Quizzes 1 and 2, on policy modules 1-7. | Social policy study paper |

**• Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues.**
In-class exercises and discussions, particularly exercises on problem and policy analysis | Social policy study paper |

**EP 2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in practice**
Social workers understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Behavior</th>
<th>Covered in class through (i.e., activity, reading, content)</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power;</td>
<td>Policy modules 3 and 4 on problem analysis on problem and policy analysis Policy module 5 Poverty and Social Disparity</td>
<td>Social policy study paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EP 2.1.5 – Advance human rights and social and economic justice**

Each person, regardless of position in society, has basic human rights, such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers recognize the global interconnections of oppression and are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote human and civil rights. Social work incorporates social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice. Social workers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Behaviors</th>
<th>Covered in class through (i.e., activity, reading, content)</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination</td>
<td>Policy modules 1, 5-7, including readings</td>
<td>Social policy study paper Quiz 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice</td>
<td>Policy Module 5, including readings</td>
<td>Social policy study paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engage in practices that advance social and economic justice</td>
<td>In class exercise on problem and policy analysis Policy module 5. Including readings</td>
<td>Social policy study paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EP 2.1.8 – Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services**

Social work practitioners understand that policy affects service delivery, and they actively engage in policy practice. Social workers know the history and current structures of social policies and services; the role of policy in service delivery; and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Behaviors</th>
<th>Covered in class through (i.e., activity, reading, content)</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being</td>
<td>In-class exercise on problem and policy analysis Policy module 4 – Tools for Policy analysis, including reading</td>
<td>Social policy study paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action</td>
<td>In-class exercise on problem and policy analysis In-class discussions</td>
<td>Social policy study paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part III: Course requirements**

**CLASS FORMAT**
This 2-credit class covers 7 learning modules that are organized by topics. Some of the modules will be presented in class, with outside activities to support the learning (for examples, readings, or films, etc.). Others will be delivered online. This course is taught primarily through lecture format, whether in person or online. The class also makes use of in-class and online work groups and discussion, guest speakers, web resources and assignments, quizzes and papers. Class-related discussion will be limited and based on assigned reading, lecture material, and online activities.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


- Additional required and recommended readings are available through e-reserve or through electronic journals through the University of Minnesota library system.

ASSIGNMENTS/EXAMS:

Online Quiz 1 - 20 points

Students will complete a brief (20 minute) short-answer quiz following completion of Policy Module 4. Content will cover all material through module 4.

Measuring Poverty on the Web

This assignment is a part of Policy Module 5 - Poverty, Discrimination and Social Disparity. This module will begin in class. Students complete the module independently by exploring several Internet sites relevant to measuring poverty, including pages from government agencies, think tanks and advocacy groups. This exercise includes a self-quiz that will not count toward the student’s overall grade. However, material from this module will be included in the last quiz.

Quiz 2 - 20 points

Students will complete a brief (20 minute) short-answer quiz covering content from policy modules 4 through 6, and material from the Measuring Poverty on the Web assignment (Policy Module 5).

Social Policy Study – 50 points

All students will submit a hard copy and electronic copy of a paper (15 typewritten pages maximum, excluding references, appendices), that analyzes a specific social problem and the major policy(ies) designed to solve it. Principles to be used in the analysis will be covered in during modules 2 and 3. All students should submit a hard copy and an electronic copy of their papers. Copies cannot be accepted by fax.
Class participation and discussion, In class and online – 10 points
Engaged participation in course learning activities, including classroom exercises, discussions and online discussions is expected of all students, and will be assessed as part of the final semester grade. Participation includes coming to class, arriving on time and staying for the entire class, being prepared for classroom discussions by being thoroughly familiar with assigned readings or activities, keeping comments and questions focused on the course content and linking questions and comments to assigned readings as well as to contributions of other students. Students will receive feedback on their participation grade approximately halfway through the semester.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION
The grade weight for each assignment is listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Grade Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
<td>Available during week 4</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Policy Study</td>
<td>End of semester – exam week</td>
<td>50 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation and discussion</td>
<td>Varies – depends on collection</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading Scale:

A       = 93 - 100
A-      = 90 - 92
B+      = 87 - 89
B       = 83 - 86
B-      = 80 - 82
C+      = 77 - 79
C       = 73 - 76
C-      = 70 - 72
D+      = 67 - 69
D       = 60 - 66

• To complete the course successfully a student must complete and receive a passing grade for each assignment.
• You must take this class for a grade. This class is offered on an A-F basis only.

COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS AND INCOMPLETES
Assignments should be typed, double-spaced, and use inclusive language. Students should use the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, (6th edition), as a guide for writing papers and citing sources. The instructor will give general instructions in class for citing primary source materials. The instructor asks that students not use special folders or covers when submitting assignments.

Assignments are due in class on the date assigned. Failure to turn in an assignment on the due date will result in a lowered grade: students will lose one point for each day the assignment is past due.
Course Policies

There are many University and School of Social Work policies that govern this course. Please go to http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/Documents/SSWCoursePolicies.pdf to see a complete description of all the policies.

Part IV: Course content

Session One

Course Introduction
Policy Module 1 – Introduction to Social Welfare Policy

Course Introduction
• Introductions
• Syllabus
• Assignments
• Course website

Policy Module 1 – Introduction to Social Welfare Policy
• What is policy? What is social welfare policy?
• The nature of the American welfare state
  ▪ Levels of governance; levels of policy (federal, state, local and agency)
  ▪ Public and private social provision
  ▪ Special interests in shaping social welfare policy
• Institutional and residual social welfare

Required readings:


Sessions Two and Three

Policy Module 2 – Approaches to Social Welfare
• Perspectives and approaches to studying and understanding policy
  ▪ Social needs perspective
  ▪ Subjugation and social control
  ▪ Political interest
• Justifying the welfare state
Social welfare policy and social work practice

Class lecture
Small group discussion

Required readings:


Sessions Four and Five

Policy Module 3 – Tools for Social Problem Analysis
Case example: Social Problem Analysis – Wisconsin Child Support Program

Bring to class:
• Copy of the Nichols-Casebolt & Garfinkle article

Policy Module 3 - Tools For Social Problem Analysis

• What is a social problem?
• Problems versus needs
• Chambers & Wedel: Components of problem analysis

Class lecture
Small group exercise:
  • Use the Nichols-Casebolt & Garfinkle article on the Wisconsin Child Support Program to apply the 4-step process of social problem analysis.

Required readings:


Sessions Six and Seven

Policy Module 4 – Tools for Social Policy Analysis
Case example: Social Problem Analysis – Wisconsin Child Support Program

Bring to class:
  • Copy of the Nichols-Casebolt & Garfinkle article
  • Copy of the Social Policy Assignment – you’ll find this on the course website

Policy Module 4 – Tools for Social Policy Analysis

• Characteristics of policies and their evaluative criteria
• The relationship between problem definition and policy
• The value-critical approach to policy analysis
• Traditional criteria policy analysis

Class lecture
Exercise with Wisconsin Child Support article

Required readings:

and program design, and Chapter 8: How do we pay for social welfare policies and programs? Analysis of financing (pp 109-204). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.


**QUICK: MODULES 1-4: Available online in the coming week**

Sessions Eight and Nine

Policy Module 5 – Poverty and Social Disparity

**Policy Module 5- Poverty, Discrimination, and Social Disparity**

- Measuring poverty
- Theories on the causes of poverty
- Income disparity and discrimination

Lecture

Exercise: Measuring Poverty – Internet resources on the contemporary debate

**Required readings:**

- Identified in exercise: Measuring Poverty on the Web


- Glennerster, Howard. (2002). United States poverty studies and poverty measurement: The past twenty-five years. Social Service Review, 76(1), 34-57. (The link for this article is available through the course e-reserve. See page 6 of the syllabus.)


Sessions Ten and Eleven

Policy Module 6 - Income Support Programs

Policy Module 6 – Income Support Programs

• Income support programs
  ▪ OASDI - social insurance
  ▪ Unemployment insurance – social insurance
  ▪ TANF – public assistance
• Other income support programs
  ▪ SSI
  ▪ Earned Income Tax Credit

Required Readings:


• House Ways and Means Committee - 2008 Green Book
  Go to http://democrats.waysandmeans.house.gov/singlepages.aspx?NewsID=10490. This will take you to different chapters outlining different social service programs that receive federal funding.

Recommended: The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (http://www.cbpp.org/) provides an excellent summary of many of our major programs of social insurance and public assistance. Check out the Policy Basics link at this website, for a quick overview of
policies, and a short podcast on many different policies and programs.

Sessions Twelve and Thirteen

**Policy Module 7 – Medical and Nutrition Programs**

- Medicare and Medicaid
- State Health Insurance Programs
- SNAP and Programs of Nutrition Assistance

**Required Readings:**


Additional Bibliography


- Segal, Elizabeth, and Peck, Laura. (2006). The Sequential costs of poverty: What traditional measures overlook. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 33(1), 227-238. (The link for this article is available through the course e-reserve. See page 6 of the syllabus.)


