Course Syllabus

SOWK 470
Social Policy Analysis

Winter 2008      M/W 1:00 p.m. – 3:20 p.m.
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Course Description
This course focuses on social welfare policy and is practice oriented. It seeks to empower social workers in the policy arena and demonstrate how social workers can impact policy development, implementation, and analysis in partnership with their clients and other human services advocates. Students will learn policy research and analysis skills to supplement entry-level competencies in social work practice. They will also learn the skills and strategies to advocate for fair and just policy change within the human services delivery system. The focus of class discussions includes current issues, challenges, and strategies for empowerment in the field of human services.

Course Rationale
Social workers are subject to social welfare policies that control the fundamental aspects of their clients’ lives, their work, and their ability to address the complexity of issues they face every day. In order to work successfully with clients and within agencies, communities, and other systems, social workers must be knowledgeable of existing policies that impact the provision of services. They must also understand how these policies impact their clients from the clients’ perspectives. They need to appreciate how our economic, political, and social structures impact the development and implementation of social welfare policies, as well as how our diverse cultural values and ideologies impact the definition of problems and societal attempts to solve them. Therefore, this course seeks to help students develop skills in research, analysis, communication, client empowerment, civic engagement, and advocacy related to social welfare policy.

Course Objectives
Upon completion of the course, the student should be able to:
* Define and discuss social welfare policy;
* Apply a client-centered framework in the analysis of social welfare policies;
* Critically assess the relationship between social problems and social policies;
* Understand the value premises underlying social welfare policies;
* Recognize policy options and the values which support each choice of options.;
* Weigh the benefits and costs when considering different policy options;
* Understand the history of social welfare policy in the United States and realize its effect on current social policy;
* Understand themes and issues pertaining to social work policy that are of particular
importance to the profession of social work, such as social and economic justice, poverty, and the historical and current practices of discrimination based on race, gender, class, age, sexual orientation, and disability;
* Use the social science and social welfare/social work literature in the analysis of social welfare policy; and
* Understand and develop skills in policy practice and advocacy, and understand how to promote client participation in analysis and advocacy activities.

Course Structure
Course objectives will be addressed through a combination of class lectures and discussions, guest lectures, small group work, in- and out-of-class exercises, media reviews, videotapes, and student presentations. Students will also increase their understanding of the material through library and internet research and analysis.

Class Culture
All true learning and integration occur in the present tense; in other words, the more one is present, the more one can learn. Students are encouraged to be actively engaged with the material, the instructor, and each other while in class. They are also asked to refrain from texting, web surfing, and instant messaging while in class. The teacher promises to refrain, as well.

Students are expected to adhere to EWU’s Student Academic Integrity Policy (www.ewu.edu/x4326.xml).

Assignments and Expectations

Required Reading
Additional readings will be assigned or distributed.

Participation in Class and in Group Work
Active engagement and thoughtful communication are crucial to the development of sound professional perspectives on social problems and policy options, and active class participation will enhance analytical and communication skills. Thus an engaged, communicative, and present student will earn full credit for participation. In cases of multiple absences or apathetic disengagement, points will be deducted. (10 points)

Mid-Term Examination (February 25)
This examination will provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the foundational concepts, issues, and ideas of social welfare policy analysis. It will contain a combination of objective and short-answer essay questions, covering Chapters 1 - 6 in the textbook. (30 points)
Policy Analysis Project
A four-part policy analysis project will engage students in the realities of current social problems and societal attempts to address them. This project will be guided by a critical theory model of policy analysis. Students will analyze a social welfare problem and relevant public policy incrementally throughout the course. This method will allow them to explore more fully the policy literature, apply policy analysis skills as they learn them, receive feedback on their skill development throughout the course, and more effectively integrate the theory of policy analysis with their practice.

In each assignment, students will engage in policy research and write an analysis no longer than three double-spaced pages and a reference page. Keeping to this requirement will be a good exercise in concise writing. Students will receive additional project parameters from the instructor in class, and some classroom time will be dedicated to exploring the potential for creating learning opportunities in these assignments.

Assignment #1: The Social Problem: An Overview
Due January 30 (15 points)
Research a current social problem and write an analysis that explains the issue from various perspectives, the power imbalances inherent in the issue, and public reactions to this problem.

Assignment #2: Relevant Public Policies and Programs
Due February 20 (15 points)
Research social welfare policies that attempt to impact this problem. Write an analysis that addresses the policies, conflicting values and ideologies, and the implementation of resulting social welfare programs.

Assignment #3: Impact of Policies and Programs
Due March 5 (15 points)
Research the intended and actual impact of these policies and programs. Write an analysis that addresses the costs and benefits, the public expectations of the policy response, and the impact on affected populations.

Assignment #4: Policy Advocacy
Due March 12 (15 points)
Investigate advocacy activities by local, state, or national groups that address this problem. Write an analysis that explores the levels of activity and influence of advocacy efforts, as well as opportunities for involvement for social welfare policy advocates.

Grading: 100 points possible
Class Participation 10
Mid-term Examination 30
Policy Analysis Project
Assignment #1 15
Assignment #2 15
Assignment #3 15
Assignment #4 15
Course Outline

Week 1

January 7  Introduction to the course and each other
           Introduction to American social welfare policy

January 9  Underlying values and beliefs in social welfare
           Our major social institutions
           Read: Chapter 1

Week 2

January 14 Policy resources: policy literature, source documents
             Mass media primer
             Class discussion of policy analysis project
             Historical foundations of social welfare in America

January 16 Historical foundations, continued
           The modern welfare state
           Video tribute: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
           Read: Chapter 2

Week 3

January 21 Holiday: Celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

January 23 Conceptual foundations of social welfare policy
           Current forces impacting social policy
           Read: Chapter 3

Week 4

January 28 Institutional context of social welfare
           Civics review: federalism, branches of our government

January 30 The delivery of social welfare services
           Forms of social welfare assistance
           Read: Chapter 4
           Assignment #1 Due
Week 5

February 4  Social welfare policy analysis: models and dynamics  
**Read**: Chapter 6

February 6  Exercises in social welfare policy analysis

Week 6

February 11  Social justice and civil rights  
The many faces of oppression  
**Read**: Chapter 5

February 13  The role of social workers in securing social justice  
Preparation for Lobby Day in Olympia and in our home districts

Week 7

February 18  ****************************Lobby Day in Olympia******************************
Presidents’ Day Holiday: Celebrate by exercising your civic power

February 20  Lobby Day report by advocates who participated  
Social workers and clients mobilizing for change  
Speakers: VOICES  
**Assignment #2 Due**

Week 8

February 25  **Foundational Mid-Term Examination**, Chapters 1-6  
In-class exercise in social welfare policy analysis

February 27  Social insurance  
**Review**: Chapter 7

Week 9

March 3  Poverty and economic inequality  
**Review**: Chapter 8

March 5  The US economy: employment, budgets, and taxes  
**Review**: Chapter 9  
**Assignment #3 Due**

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Week 10

March 10   Children and family policy
**Review:** Chapter 10

March 12   Health care policy
**Review:** Chapter 11

Aging and social policy
**Review:** Chapter 12
**Assignment #4 Due**

Week 11

March 17   U.S. and international perspectives on social welfare policy
**Review:** Chapter 13

The above requirements and course schedule may be changed to advance course objectives at the discretion of the instructor.


