School of Social Work
University of Wisconsin-Madison
1350 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53706

SW 920: Child Youth and Family Policies and Services
Fall 2014

Instructor: Jamie Tester, MSW
Class Meeting Time: Saturdays 9:00am-1:00pm
Location: Room HSS, Room 179
Office Hours: By Appointment
Phone: 218-340-8928 (cell)
Email: testerjamie@wisc.edu

I. Catalogue Description
This course considers legislation, policies and institutional structures that affect children, youth and families across multiple services systems.

II. Course Overview
SW920 fulfills the policy and services requirement for the Child, Youth and Family Welfare concentration. The course provides a review of some of the challenges facing children, adolescents and their families and an overview of the social services and policies that address the these challenges as well as the needs of children, youth and families in the U.S. – as well as the role of these policies and services in the context of the formal and informal systems that affect these populations. Students will develop skills for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of these services and policies, for identifying, analyzing and evaluating their intersections, and for understanding their effect on children, youth and families. In the context of recent trends in social expenditures, labor markets, and demographic characteristics in the U.S., we will focus on a set of institutions and related policies that are relevant to: child and family poverty (e.g., cash and in-kind transfers and other means tested and/or child conditioned programs); education and youth development; health care; child welfare/child abuse and neglect; and the criminal justice system. Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which involvement in the multiple service systems may affect children, youth and families, as well as innovations in policies and programs to serve families with multiple needs. While the course will primarily focus on the U.S., it will touch upon cross-national comparative issues, in order to set a larger context in which to consider U.S. child and family services and policies.

III. Course Competencies & Practice Behaviors & Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies Addressed in Course</th>
<th>Practice Behaviors Addressed in Course</th>
<th>Assignment(s) Measuring Behavior</th>
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| 2.1.2: Apply SW ethical principles to guide professional practice | ■ Evaluating ethical dilemmas related to problems and issues related to children, youth and families.  
■ Weighing values, principles of ethical decision-making, and the NASW code of ethics in order to address ethical dilemmas related to practice in the children, youth and families area. | All: Class Discussion of “The Wire” & Mid-term paper |
2.1.3: Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
- Identifying and synthesizing multiple sources of knowledge to understand policy and practices issues related to children, youth and families.
- Identifying and evaluating models of assessment, prevention, intervention and evaluation that are appropriate to children, youth and families.

2.1.4: Engage diversity and difference in practice
- Demonstrating an understanding of how culture and values affect diverse conceptualizations and constructions of social problems and solutions related to children, youth and families.

2.1.5: Advance human rights and social and economic justice
- Appraising how mechanisms of oppression and discrimination impact various groups and outcomes relevant to children, youth and families.

2.1.6: Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research
- Critically evaluating and utilizing theoretical and empirical research relevant to the problems and/or populations addressed related to children, youth and families.

2.1.8: Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services
- Evaluating, formulating, and advocating for policies that advance outcomes relevant to children, youth and families.

2.1.9: Respond to contexts that shape practice
- Assessing the impact of historical and contemporary contexts on practice and policy related to children, youth and families

All: Final Paper
Class Discussion of “The Wire”
Mid-term paper
Final paper
Class Discussion of “The Wire”
Mid-term paper
Final paper
Class Discussion of “The Wire” & Final paper
Letter to elected official & Final paper
Final paper

IV. Course Content

SECTION I: Background
Understanding Children, Youth & Family in Ecological and Institutional Context

Week 1: Sept. 6
Topic 1: What Children & Youth Need: (65) (skim if you have a solid background in youth & human development)

Required Readings:
   Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

**Topic 2: Challenges facing Children & Families in the U.S**

The problem of Poverty and Economic Inequality

**Required Readings:**
1. Selected Readings and Tables from The Economic Policy Institute’s *State of Working America* website. [http://www.stateofworkingamerica.org/features/view/1](http://www.stateofworkingamerica.org/features/view/1)

**Week 2: Sept 13**

**Topic 1: Families in an Ecological Context: General Theory and Neighborhood Effects**

**Required Readings:**

**Topic 2: Theories of Poverty and the “breakdown” of the Traditional Family Form: Individual-level Explanations: Culture of Poverty and Human Capital Theories**

**Required Readings:**

**SECTION II: Problems Confronting Children, Youth & Families**

**Youth & Adolescent Development in an Ecological context:**

**The Case of Concentrated Poverty Neighborhoods**

**Week 3: Sept 20**

**Topic 1: Theories of Poverty and the “breakdown” of the Traditional Family Form**

The Structural” Perspective; Wilson’s Theory of the Urban Underclass
**Required Readings:**
2. Reading TBA

**Week 4: Sept 27**
**Topic 1:** The Structural Perspective
Constructing Zones of Concentrated Poverty

**Required Readings:**

**Topic 2:** The Structural View continued…
When Work Disappears: Effects on Children, Youth and Families

**Required Readings:**

**Week 5: Oct 4**
**Topic 1:** The Structural View continued…
The Effects of Social Isolation on the Basic Social Fabric of Communities

**Required Readings:**
Recommended Reading

Topic 2: Overview of the Services Continuum: Primary Prevention, Early Intervention

Required Readings:
*Readings for this lecture TBA*

Section III: *American Social Policies and Institutions & Their Effect on Children, Youth & Families*

Week 6: Oct 11
Topic 1: American Social Welfare Policies and Institutions: Their Effect on Children, Youth & Families:

Required Readings:

Topic 2: The Income Support System: TANF and Child Support

Required Readings:
**Week 7: Oct. 18**

**Topic 1: Work Supports, Child Care and Fatherhood Initiatives**

**Required Readings:**

**Topic 2: The Public Education System**

**Required Readings:**
2. TBA

**Week 8: Oct 25**

**Topic 1: The Child Welfare System**

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Topic 2: Institutions Matter: The Criminal (& Juvenile) Justice System**

**Required Readings:**

V. Texts and Reading Materials for the Course
2) Video Recording: The Wire, 2007. The complete Fourth season / Home Box Office, Inc. ; [presented by] HBO Original Programming ; created by David Simon. Available at UW library (1 copy); also available for purchase via Amazon.com or other on-line venders; available for rent at most video rental venders and Netflix.
3) Watching The Wire: Resources

HBO Home Page for The Wire:
http://www.hbo.com/the-wire/index.html#the-wire/index.html

HBO page with complete synopsis(es) of each episode from season 1 through season 5.
Note: to find episode synopsis, find the episode you’re looking for, click on it; that episode’s page will then open and on the left side of the page, you’ll see the word “synopsis”. Click it. A thorough synopsis will then appear on screen (note that on the right side is a somewhat obscure scroll bar to navigate downward on the page).

HBO page featuring The Wire’s Cast of (main) Characters
http://www.hbo.com/the-wire/index.html#the-wire/cast-and-crew.html/eNjcmbo0CzLTeN3d8xLzKksyUx2zs8rSa0oYS85kzlfPz0mBCQckpql6JeamsigY
SSeWluQX5CRW2pYUlaZyMjKyMQIAbAUXOA==
Note: This page is VERY important, as this series has an enormous cast of characters that run in and out of the plotlines over its 5 seasons)
Note 2: if this link fails: go to main HBO page for the Wire – above – and scroll down to link “Cast of Characters.”

VI. Evaluation of Competencies and Practice Behaviors: Assignments, Grading and Methods

Grading
Grades are not assigned on a curve. There are no extra credit or make-up assignments. Grades on each assignment and your final grade will be assigned as follows:

Students' final grade will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>What the point totals &amp; subsequent grade generally indicate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outstanding, excellent work in all areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-93</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Outstanding, excellent work in many areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-87</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Meets expectations in all areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-81</td>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Meets expectations in most areas; below in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-75</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Below expectations in most areas; not acceptable graduate work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-69</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Below expectations in all areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;64</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Course failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Professional Conduct</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to Elected Official</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Discussion Wire</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term Paper</td>
<td>20 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leading Small Group Discussion</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper or Final Presentation</td>
<td>40 points</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 points</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note that the >= sign proceeding the lower cut-off point for each grade implies that numerical grades will not be rounded up. Additionally, your goal for this and other courses should be to make the most of your learning experience, and not to simply “get an A.” Your expectations about the grades you receive on assignments should be wholly based on (1) your efforts, (2) the extent to which you respond to assignment objectives, (3) the quality of your writing (including grammar and spelling, organization and clarity), and (4) your ability to demonstrate critical thinking. If there is something about an assignment that is unclear to you, it is your job to bring this to my attention. Grade expectations should NOT be based on what you have received in other courses. If you have an issue with a grade that you receive in this course, please document the reasons for your appeal in writing with specific attention to the four points raised above.

Assignments

**General Professional Conduct (5 points)**

Students are expected to conduct themselves as professionals and to act in this educational environment as they would act within a professional setting. This means students are expected to attend each class, to be on time and to prepare for each class by completing the required reading in advance, coming to class with questions and comments, and participating in class discussion. In addition, professional conduct does not end when students leave the classroom. Students will be expected to communicate with the instructor via email or telephone in a professional manner, as would be expected in a professional setting. General professional conduct will be evaluated based on students’ in class performance during the week the student is a discussion leader (see below), the weeks the student is not, and any other interactions with classmates or instructor.

1. **Letter to your Senator or Representative (10 points)**
   **Due:** Saturday of week 2 by 9:00 am via dropbox on Learn@UW, Length: 2 pages single spaced (Professional letter format)

   Drawing on readings for week 2 – particularly the Economic Policy Institute’s *State of Working America* website and/or the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s *KIDS COUNT* website and database, you will prepare a 2 page letter to your Congress person on an issue that describes and analyzes a small set of social indicators that illustrates and sheds light on various problems, issues & concerns of Children, Youth and Families. More detailed instructions will be distributed in class.
2. **Class Discussion of The Wire. (10 points)**
   
   **Due:** either Saturday of week 3, 4 or 5 by 9:00 am via dropbox on Learn@UW, **Length:** 2-3 page memo.

   For this short assignment, you will develop a 2-3 page memo in which you analyze a scene from Season 4 of the Wire (students will be divided into 4 different analytic groups: group A will examine scenes from episodes 1-3, relating them to Wilson, Chapter 1; Group B will examine scenes from episodes 4-6, relating them to Wilson chapter 2; Group C = Episodes 7-9, relating to Wilson, chapter 3 and Group D = Episodes 10-13, relating to Wilson chapter 4.

3. **Mid-Term Paper (20 points)**
   
   **Character Analysis: Applying Ecological & Structural Theories**

   **Due:** Saturday of week 6 by 9:00 am via dropbox on Learn@UW. **Length:** 4-5 pages.

   For this assignment, you will describe and analyze one character (or a defined “set” of characters) from Season 4 of The Wire (almost anyone will do: a parent, one of the featured boys, gang members, members of police force or other service-oriented institutions).

   As characters in the series vary dramatically from one another, your analyses will vary in their content and focus; but all papers must include a thorough description of the character and some form of analysis – usually in the form of what that character teaches us about the ecological context, or the nature of service delivery, or the way policies are implemented (whether implementation be functional or dysfunctional).

   We’ll discuss this assignment in more detail as we begin to view and analyze The Wire.

4. **Leading Small-Group Discussion of readings for one class session (20 points)**

   **Due:** Saturday of either week 6 or 7 via dropbox on Learn@UW.

   For this assignment, you will prepare and lead (facilitate) one group discussion (we’ll define this further in session #1) of a particular week’s readings and themes. The assignment entails the following:

   - **Product 1:** a 1-2 page briefing paper that summarizes the week’s reading;
   - **Product 2:** 1-page “lesson plan” for your group’s discussion in a way that stimulates a vibrant and insight-filled conversation among members.

   This plan must include at least 3 “questions of the week” that you will develop and distribute among your group members in class. [Note: you should, of course, have some sort of answer for each of your questions]

5. **Final Paper (40 points)**

   - **Due:** Sunday, October 26 @ 11:59 pm via dropbox on Learn@UW. **Length:** 8-10 pages.

   Instructions for final paper will be distributed by week 8.

6. **EXTRA CREDIT**

   - **Due:** 11:59 pm on the Wednesday following each class. **Length:** not more than 1 pg.

   Value: if completed for 7 of the 8 class periods students will receive a half grade bump (ie. B to a AB). Students must submit an email containing answers to the following questions for each week (please no attachments). The subject line of the email should read: “MSW920. E-mail for (date of class), from (your name)”
1. What did you feel were the muddiest parts of the class or any questions or comments that you had at the end of the class or you have thought of since?
2. Any feedback or comments you have regarding class last week? (at least 50 words)
3. What did you feel were the key points that you took away from the class?

VII. Course Policies

Readings & Class Preparation
Each week, students will be expected to complete the required readings before class, to provide a perspective or context for class discussions. Students must come to class having done the readings and being prepared to connect them to the larger environment in which children, youth and family function. While many of the readings focus on a particular type of trend or policy/service, in class we will apply them to the multiple issues families face, as well as the intersection of the various programs designed to serve them, and the ways in which they can be assisted in navigating these complex systems. Students are encouraged to bring specific examples from their own work to the discussion.

Attendance
Due to the accelerated nature of courses in the University of Wisconsin-Madison Part-Time MSW Program, students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and to arrive on time.

Promptness
Prompt arrival to all courses is required.
- Instructors may take actions they deem appropriate if a student is consistently tardy
- Instructors may also consider a significantly late arrival or early departure as an absence

Absence
To ensure a quality educational experience, students must attend and participate in classes.
- Attendance will be taken at each class and students’ level of participation noted
- Excused & Unexcused Absences:
  ~ The first unexcused absence will result in a student’s grade being dropped one full grade
  ~ The second unexcused absence will place the student at risk for failing the course
  ~ On a case by case basis, it is left to the instructor’s discretion as to what is defined as an excused absence as well as to determine appropriate follow up plans
- Additional graded make-up work appropriate for the content missed will be assigned for excused and unexcused absences.
- Students are responsible for completing any class requirements for the day missed, and for obtaining from a fellow classmate any assignments, materials, and communications missed due to absence, late arrival, or early departure.
- Students who must be absent due to inclement weather or other emergencies should contact the instructor prior to the start of class to be considered for an excused absence.
- Inclement Weather Policy
  ~ If there is inclement weather across the Program area, students will be expected to check their email prior to leaving for class to confirm whether classes are cancelled.
If classes are not cancelled but an individual student concludes he/she cannot safely travel to reach his/her class site, the student must contact his/her instructor(s) regarding his/her plan to not travel. This absence will be considered excused and makeup work may be assigned.

If classes at one or both sites are cancelled by the Program Director and Co-Director, then no makeup assignment will be required for those respective students; however, the class time will be rescheduled. The Program Coordinator will notify students by email within 72 hours of the cancellation regarding the planned class day/time additions.

Late Assignment Policy
Assignments are due on the date specified. Students who believe they have a legitimate reason for turning in a late assignment should contact the instructor prior to the due date. Unapproved late assignments will be marked down three points for each day they are late. You are required to contact the instructor if you will be handing in a paper late. The instructor will NOT contact you if an assignment is not received.

Disability Accommodations
The professor adheres to University and school policies regarding accommodations for students with disabilities, religious holidays, incompletes, plagiarism and student evaluation of the course and its instruction.

Student Behavior Policy
In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different from ourselves. Each and every voice in the classroom is important and brings with it a wealth of experiences, values and beliefs. In this time we share together over the semester, please honor the uniqueness of your fellow classmates, and appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from each other. Please respect your fellow students’ opinions and refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind. Finally, remember to keep confidential all issues of a personal or professional nature discussed in class.