I. Catalogue Description.

Analysis of policy issues as applied to such fields as poverty, discrimination, crime, physical and mental health on both national and state levels.

II. Course Overview.

This course covers U.S. social welfare policy. Students will be introduced to alternative perspectives on social problem analysis and the scope and limitations of social policy and the policy making process. A major focus of this course is to help students develop an understanding of the issues of poverty, its definition, demographic scope, and alternative explanations for why it is relatively high and unevenly distributed. Students will also review major economic security programs in the US, with particular emphasis on the distinction between social insurance and welfare programs. While income support policy is the focus of much of the lecture content and assigned readings, other policies are also covered, and the student is exposed to another area of social policy in more depth through an individualized project. The course is required for MSW students and is a professional foundation course. It is also open to interested graduate students from other departments. No previous course work is required.

III. Course Competencies and Practice Behaviors, and Assignments

Social Work Education is framed by a competency based approach to curriculum design. At the conclusion of their education, social work students are expected to be competent in 10 core areas. Competency is achieved through the attainment of measureable practice behaviors learned through classroom and field experiences, and which are derived from social work knowledge, values and skills. Social Work students will find that this course contributes to their achievement of the core competencies as follows:

<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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2: Apply SW ethical principles to guide professional practice</td>
<td>*Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions</td>
<td>Exams, Papers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 2.1.3: Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments | * Distinguish, appraise and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom.  
* Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention and evaluation.  
* Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, | Exams, Papers, Presentation                         |
The main objectives of this course are:

1) furthering the student's knowledge about the problems of populations-at-risk that might be lessened by policy intervention;
2) furthering the student's knowledge about the content, and structure of social welfare policies, programs, and services in the U.S, focusing on furthering the student's knowledge about income support policy and increasing the student's understanding of the way income support policy interacts with other social policies and affects other social problems;
3) furthering the student's knowledge about the effects of U.S. social policy, including the role of social policy in helping or deterring people in the maintenance or attainment of optimal health and well-being and in facilitating or hindering social inclusion;
4) increasing the student's skills in policy analysis through a framework for analyzing policies in light of principles of social and economic justice;
5) furthering the student’s understanding of distributive justice, human and civil rights, and the global interconnectedness of oppression;
6) furthering the student's understanding of the policy-making process, developing a commitment to policy advocacy, and sharpening the student's skills to effectively advocate for nondiscriminatory, respectful, and culturally-sensitive practices in social and economic systems.

### IV. Text, Class Session Topics and Readings

There is one required text for this course:

Other materials are available at Learn@UW. Students are also required to search out and read supplemental material pertinent to their specific assignments.

Because the field of social policy is dynamic, and because my assessment of what each class needs depends on factors that I cannot predict in advance, the required readings after week 7 may change somewhat; changes will be announced by email and on Learn@UW.

**Week 1, January 17:** Introduction to social welfare policy (includes course overview and expectations, how to approach the course, definitions of social policy, and beginning discussion of why social workers should care)
- No readings

**Week 2, January 24:** Frameworks for understanding US social welfare policy
- DF, Chapters 1, 2, 6, and 7

**Week 3, January 31:** Frameworks for understanding US social welfare policy continued
- DF, Chapter 11

*PROPOSAL FOR POLICY PROJECT TOPIC DUE IN CLASS ON JANUARY 31*

**Week 4, February 7:** Measuring social problems, with a focus on poverty
- DF, Chapter 8

**Week 5, February 14:** History of social welfare policy and Policy in the US in global context
- DF, Chapter 3-5.
- Maddalena Honorati, Ugo Gentilini, and Rustan G Yemtsov. 2015. “Inventory of Social Safety Net
Week 6, February 21: Social welfare policies and inequality by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity


*Background Readings:*

These two chapters offer historical policy reviews to properly contextualize the differential impact of policy across race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity. This may be repetitive for some and new to others. Read thoroughly if this is new, skim if you have this background.


Week 7, February 28: MIDTERM #1

Week 8, March 7: Policies and programs for those who are not yet elders, part 1: Not targeted on those with low incomes (child support, minimum wage laws, child care, social services, child welfare, unemployment compensation, workers’ compensation, etc.)

GUEST SPEAKER: Dan Meyer, Professor, UW-Madison School of Social Work

- DF, selections from chapters 9, 10, and 15, pages 198-207, 248-262, 264-266, 353-360
Week 9, March 14: Policies and programs for those who are not yet elders, part 2: Targeted on those with low incomes (TANF, SNAP, public housing, EITC, etc.)

- DF, selections from chapters 9 and 10, pages 207-219, 240-248

*SOCIAL PROBLEM PAPER DUE ON MARCH 16 AT 11:59PM

Week 10, March 21: Spring break, no class

Week 11, March 28: Policies and programs in health and mental health

GUEST SPEAKER: Jake Schuldies, MSW, LCSW, Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center

- DF, chapter 10, pages 221-240, 262-264

Week 12, April 4: Policies and programs for those who are elders and those with disabilities

- DF, selections from chapter 10, pages 186-198

Week 13, April 11: MIDTERM #2

Weeks 14-16, April 18, April 25, & May 2: Class presentations on policy issues

*FINAL POLICY ANALYSIS PAPER DUE ON TUES., MAY 9, 12:05 P.M. (UNIVERSITY POLICY)
V. Evaluation of Competencies and Practice Behaviors: Expectations, Assignments, and Grading

Expectations

Students are expected to:

• Attend class each session, actively participating in the in-class exercises and discussions. If you cannot attend class, you are responsible for knowing what occurred and for getting any handouts.
• Read critically (and think about) all required assignments before coming to class. Many students find it useful to take notes.
• Complete all assignments by the due dates and times (thus you are expected to plan your life so that you can make the required deadlines in the course).
• Inform the instructor during the first week of the semester of any special accommodations the student believes will be needed for meeting class expectations. A copy of the VISA from the McBurney Center must be given to the instructor within the first two weeks of the semester so that any needed accommodations can be made.
• Be respectful of the instructor and other class members—a diversity of views and opinions may be articulated during discussions.
• Conduct yourselves as professionals during class and during interactions with the instructor outside of class. This includes such conduct as:
  o Turning off (or silencing) cell phones (and pagers) during class.
  o Refrain from taking calls, texting, and using social media, or from using the internet for anything other than directed class work.
  o Write email correspondence to the instructor and other students in a manner that would be considered professional, respectful, and timely.
• Use laptops and other electronic devices only for taking notes. Taking handwritten notes is strongly recommended and has been associated with better learning outcomes compared to note-taking on laptops (see the 2014 article "The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard" by Mueller and Oppenheimer: http://pss.sagepub.com/content/25/6/1159)

The instructor is expected to:

• Co-create a classroom environment that facilitates learning.
• Assure that course objectives are being met.
• Hold regular office hours.
• Be available to address student questions through emailed correspondence.
• Give reasonable guidance on preparing for the exams and assignments.
• Provide prompt feedback on evaluation materials for the course

Assignments

Five assignments contribute to your grade. Not attending class can lower your grade; active participation can increase your grade if you are on the margin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
<th>Exam/Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Policy topic proposal</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>January 31 in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Midterm #1</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>February 28 in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Social problem paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>March 16 by 11:59pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Midterm #2</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>April 11 in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In-class presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>April 18, April 25, &amp; May 2 in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Social policy analysis paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>May 9 at 12:05pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Midterms.** Two in-class midterms will be given. Missing either midterm without pre-approved permission will nearly certainly cause you to receive a zero for that assignment. (Rationale: There is a body of knowledge on this topic that I believe social workers should know, and an examination is one way to encourage you to “nail down” the knowledge base as well as a way for me to evaluate what you have mastered.)

**Policy project.** An individualized project on an approved social policy topic is a key part of this course. Examples of topics include: policies to help elders stay in their own homes, policies that assist with the affordability of child care, income support for those with severe and persistent mental illness, etc.

**Your proposal for your policy topic is due in class on January 31.** This project has several required products; selected information follows here, more details will be posted at Learn@UW. (Rationale: this allows you to focus your learning in a topic area in which you are most interested; the building of these assignments requires you to take your knowledge about one area into more depth; class presentations broaden the policy areas covered for all students.)

(a) **Social problem/social policy description paper:** You are required to write a brief structured paper in which you describe the social problem you are examining and the policies currently in place to address this problem. The paper is due in the Learn@UW dropbox by **11:59 p.m. on Thursday, March 16th.** (Rationale: this provides an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of a social problem and social policies in written form; it gives you early feedback on whether you’re on track for the presentation and policy analysis paper; it ensures that you start your project in a timely way)

(b) **Class presentation:** Students are required to give a brief presentation on an aspect of your individualized project topic to the whole class. Class presentations are scheduled for **April 18, April 25, and May 2.** You may indicate the date you prefer to present on in your policy topic proposal; the instructor will take into account student preferences when scheduling class presentations. (Rationale: this provides an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge in oral form; it gives you feedback on your presentation skills; it lets the whole class learn from about a wide range of policies)

(c) **Social policy analysis paper:** You are required to write a social policy analysis paper on your policy topic in which you will consider the advantages/disadvantages of current policies and make recommendations for policy changes. The paper is due by **12:05 p.m. on Tuesday, May 9** (due date set by university policy). (Rationale: this paper gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to analyze social welfare policies; professional social workers are expected to gain the policy practice skills need to identify, define, and analyze a social problem and the social welfare policy response)

**More details on all assignments will be provided and are to be considered part of this syllabus.**

**Grading Scale and Standards**

Each assignment will be graded with a numerical score. The final grade will reflect the total points earned on all assignments. The assignment of letter grade to numerical score is based on the following standard:

- **A** 94-100 outstanding work, surpasses minimum expectations in most areas
- **AB** 88-93 surpasses minimum expectations in some areas, but not in others
- **B** 82-87 meets minimum expectations
- **BC** 76-81 meets minimum expectations in some areas, but is below minimum expectations in others
Grading Questions and Late Assignment Policy

• Any requests for extensions on assignments must be made and approved in advance of the due date. Late assignments without prior approval will be penalized and may not be accepted.

• If there is something about an assignment that is unclear to you, it is your job to bring this to the instructor's attention.

• Your grade on written assignments will be based on (1) the extent to which you respond to assignment objectives, (2) the quality of your writing (to include grammar and spelling, organization, and clarity), and (3) your ability to demonstrate critical thinking.

• You may appeal a grade on a particular exam or assignment, but you must do so in writing, support your position with substantive arguments (addressing each of the three points above), and do so within one week of when the exam or assignment is returned.

• I expect written portions of all assignments to be typed, spell-checked, proofed for grammatical errors, and well-organized. Points will be deducted from your grade for sloppy work. If you need assistance with your writing, the Campus Writing Center is available as a free resource to all students.

VI. Code of Ethics, Student Rights and Responsibilities, & Plagiarism

Incoming MSW students read and signed electronic forms of the NASW Code of Ethics, the School of Social Work Plagiarism Policy and the Student Rights and Responsibilities. In doing so, they agreed that while in the MSW Program they would honor the NASW Code of Ethics and Student’s Rights and Responsibilities, as well as adhere to the Plagiarism Policy and that should they not do so, sanctions would be imposed. MSW students are expected to adhere to these policies in the classroom, in the field and in the preparation of course assignments.

While adherence to the social work code of ethics is required only of social workers and social work students, issues of academic misconduct affect all students and are considered extremely serious. Academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, and misrepresentation or fabrication of assignments, can result in course failure as well as disciplinary actions. It is your responsibility to ensure that all documents and material used to inform your assignments are appropriately cited. The Writing Center has a helpful guide to the difference between plagiarism and paraphrasing – see http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_paraphrase.html. The School’s plagiarism policy is posted at Learn@UW.