I. Catalog Description

Considers legislation, policies, and institutional structures that affect children, youth, and families across multiple service systems.

II. Course Overview

This course is a policies and services course within the Child, Youth and Family Welfare focus area. This course is primarily for graduate students in social work and related human service professionals. The purpose of this course is to provide students with a fundamental understanding of national, state and local child and family welfare policies, and to examine how these policies affect or are affected by social, economic and cultural trends, research evidence, and values.

Students will develop skills for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of these policies and services, for identifying, analyzing and evaluating their intersections, and for understanding their effects on children, youth and families. Particular attention will be paid to the causal logic underpinning child and family policies, how policies are implemented in practice, and to the intended and unintended outcomes of these policies. Students will enhance skills for critically consuming research and use the existing research literature as a tool for evaluating the successes and failures of various policies relevant to children, youth, and families.
III. Course Competencies and Practice Behaviors

Successful completion of this course implies that students will have progressed towards achieving some of the core social work competencies by demonstrating the following practice behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies addressed in course</th>
<th>Practice behaviors addressed in course</th>
<th>Assignments measuring behavior</th>
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</table>
| 2.1.2 Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice. | Evaluate ethical dilemmas related to problems and issues in the children, youth and families area. | Policy Portfolio  
Class Participation |
|                                  | • Identifying and synthesizing multiple sources of knowledge to understand policy and practice 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. | Policy Portfolio  
Critical Research Review  
Presentation  
Class Participation  
(All four assignments measure each of the two practice behaviors.) |
| 2.1.3 Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. | Demonstrating an understanding of how culture and values affect diverse conceptualizations and constructions of social problems and solutions relevant to children, youth, and families | Policy Portfolio  
Critical Research Review  
Presentation  
Class Participation |
| 2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in 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 are knowledgeable about the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and reasoned discernment. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity. Critical thinking also requires the synthesis and communication of relevant information.

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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1.5 Advance human rights and social and economic justice.</th>
<th>Appraising how mechanisms of oppression and discrimination impact various groups and outcomes relevant to children, youth, and families</th>
<th>Policy Portfolio Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*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.*

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<tr>
<th>2.1.6 Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research</th>
<th>Critically evaluating and utilizing theoretical and empirical research relevant to the problems and/or populations addressed in the children, youth, and families area</th>
<th>Policy Portfolio Critical Research Review Presentation Class Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge.*

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<tr>
<th>2.1.9 Respond to contexts that shape practice</th>
<th>Assessing the impact of historical and contemporary contexts on practice and policy in the children, youth and families area</th>
<th>Policy Portfolio Presentation Class Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Social workers are informed, resourceful, and proactive in responding to evolving organizational, community, and societal contexts at all levels of practice. Social workers recognize that the context of practice is dynamic, and use knowledge and skill to respond proactively.*
IV. Course Content/Outline

September 10

Part 1:
Introduction to the Course
Review of Syllabus & Class Expectations

Part 2:
What Children, Youth, & Families Need

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

In-class exercise: Describing and analyzing data

September 17

Part 1:
Evaluating Child, Youth, & Family Policy
How to Be a Critical Consumer of Research

Required readings:
- Read one of these two:

Recommended readings:

In-class exercise: Practice critical research review
Part 2: 
Interrogating the Causal Logic of Policy
Policy Logic Models

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

In-class exercise: Practice policy logic model

September 24

Part 1: 
The U.S. Social Safety Net
Policy Interventions to Increase Family Income

Required readings:

Recommended readings:
Part 2: Housing Policy

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

GUEST SPEAKER: Marah Curtis, Associate Professor, UW-Madison School of Social Work

Due: Critical Research Review (Assignment 1)

October 1

Part 1: K-12 Education Policy

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

Part 2: Child Welfare System

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

GUEST SPEAKER: Ellen Smith, Clinical Associate Professor and Child Welfare Training Coordinator, UW-Madison School of Social Work

**Due: Policy Logic Model (Assignment 2)**

October 8

Part 1:
Creating Safe Contexts for LGBTQ Youth: Within and Across System Needs and Challenges

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

GUEST SPEAKER: June Paul, Briarpatch LGBTQ Youth Group Specialist and SSW PhD Candidate

Part 2:
Promoting School Readiness through Early Care and Education
Child Care Subsidies and Early Childhood Education Programs

Required readings:


Recommended readings:

October 15

Part 1: Work-Family Policies
Paid Family Leave and Work Scheduling Policy

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

Part 2: Policy Portfolio Presentations (Assignment 4)

Due October 17: Final Policy Portfolio (Assignment 5) for Presenters on 10/15
Part 1:  
Policy Portfolio Presentations (Assignment 4)

Part 2:  
Wrap-Up and Review  
Course Evaluations

Required readings:  

Due October 24: Final Policy Portfolio (Assignment 5) for Presenters on 10/22

V. Reading Materials for the Course

See Weekly Class Descriptions for the required and recommended readings for each class, which can be accessed on Learn@UW. 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 may change somewhat no later than one week before the class session for which they are assigned; changes will be announced by email and on Learn@UW.

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

Grading Scale and Standards  
Grades will be earned on the following grade point system – a total of 100 points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points/Percentage of Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100 outstanding; surpasses expectations in all areas</td>
<td>September 24 by 9am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88-93 surpasses expectations in most areas</td>
<td>October 1 by 9am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82-87 surpasses expectations in some areas</td>
<td>September 17-October 15 (see instructions below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>76-81 meets expectations in most areas; above in others</td>
<td>October 15 &amp; October 22 (in class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-75 meets expectations in most areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-69 below expectations in all areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>64 &amp; below fails to meet minimal expectations in all areas, not acceptable work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assignment | Points/Percentage of Grade | Due Date |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Review of Research</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>September 24 by 9am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Logic Model</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>October 1 by 9am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation &amp; Reading Reflections</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>September 17-October 15 (see instructions below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Presentation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>October 15 &amp; October 22 (in class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Policy Portfolio</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>October 17 &amp; October 24 by 11:59pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assignment Descriptions

1. Policy Portfolio
   - Students will complete an individualized project on an approved social policy topic pertaining to children, youth, and/or families. Students will select a policy topic for their portfolio in consultation with the instructor. This policy topic will be used in the critical research review, policy logic model, in-class presentation, and final policy portfolio. A separate document describing the components of this assignment in more detail and a grading rubric will be posted to Learn@UW. Below is a short description of each of these components and assignments:

   o **Critical Review of Research**: Students will write a short paper on an empirical research article pertaining to their policy topic. The paper will summarize and critique the research article. The purpose of this assignment is for students to demonstrate their ability to critically evaluate research evidence and to get feedback from the instructor on this skill early on in the course.
   
   o **Policy Logic Model**: Students will create a policy logic model and write a brief description of their social policy and causal logic of the policy. The policy logic model forms the basis for the final policy portfolio, and this will allow students to get feedback early in the course.
   
   o **In-Class Presentation**: Students will give a short presentation in class on their policy portfolio. This provides an opportunity for the whole class to learn about a wide range of policies and for students to practice and receive feedback on their presentation skills.
   
   o **Final Policy Portfolio**: The policy portfolio is a written, critical analysis of the social policy topic, including the policy logic model, assessment of the research evidence related to the policy, and recommendations for improving or replacing the policy.

   - All assignments should 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.

2. Class Participation & Reading Reflections
   Your grade will be based on the following criteria:
   
   - Students are required to write a short reflection on the assigned readings for three different topics covered during the weeks of 9/17 through 10/15. (By topic, I mean either the Part 1 or Part 2 readings for that week.) Write an approximately two paragraph reflection on your reactions to the readings and include one or two questions for class discussion. The reflection should focus on issues such as (but not limited to): the policy or program’s causal logic; a critique of the research evidence; and policy or practice implications. The specific form of your reflection is less important than whether it demonstrates having carefully read and critically thought about the readings (do not simply summarize the readings). **Reflections are due by 3pm on the Friday preceding the Saturday class.**
   
   - I recognize that not everyone is able to engage in class discussions every single week (we all have our “off” days). However, everyone is expected to have completed the readings and to be prepared to discuss and answer questions about them, as well as engage respectfully with guest speakers. Completing the reflection on the readings is not
sufficient for earning all 15 class participation points. Your attendance, general pattern of participation, and quality of participation will all factor into this grade component.

**Late Assignment Policy**

Any requests for extensions on assignments must be made and approved in advance. Unapproved late assignments will be marked down 20% of the total points for that assignment for each day the assignment is late. If you are not able to be in class the day an assignment is due, you are still responsible for turning in your assignment on the due date.

**Grading Questions**

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) 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. If there is something about an assignment that is unclear to you, it is your job to bring this to the instructor’s attention. Grade expectations should NOT be based on what you have received in other courses—this is never a legitimate argument for appealing a grade. If you have an issue with a grade that you receive on a particular assignment in this course, you may appeal the grade by documenting in writing your reasons for the appeal with specific attention to the three points raised above and submitting the appeal to the instructor within one week of when the assignment is returned.

**VII. Course Expectations and Policies**

**Expectations**

Students are expected to:

- Attend class each session, actively participating in the in-class exercises and discussions.
- Read critically (and think about) all required readings 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 Disability Resource Center must be provided 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 regarding SW920 outside of class. This includes such conduct as:
  - Turning off (or silencing) cell phones (and pagers) during class.
  - Refrain from taking calls, texting, and using social media, or from using the internet for anything other than directed class work.
  - 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](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.

Attendance Policy

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.

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

To ensure a quality educational experience, students must attend and participate in all classes.
- Attendance will be taken at each class and students’ level of participation noted. Attendance and participation will count toward your class participation grade.
- Excused & Unexcused Absences:
  - The first unexcused absence will result in a student's grade being dropped by 5 percentage points (out of 100; i.e., ½ 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. In order for an absence to be excused, you must notify the instructor prior to class.
- Additional graded make-up work appropriate for the content missed will be assigned for excused and unexcused absences. Students will required to write a two page report on the topics covered in class based on the required readings as well as additional readings provided by instructor.
- 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 will be assigned.
BSW and 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 BSW or 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. BSW and 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](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_paraphrase.html). The School’s plagiarism policy is posted at Learn@UW.