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>
</tr>
</thead>
</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 |
| **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.** | | |
| 2.1.3 Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. | • 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.) |
| **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.** | | |
| 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 relevant to children, youth, and families | Policy Portfolio  
Critical Research Review  
Presentation  
Class Participation |
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.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1.5</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>

2.1.6 Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research

*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.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1.6</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>

2.1.9 Respond to contexts that shape practice

*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.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1.9</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>
IV. Course Content/Outline

September 6  
**Introduction to the Course**  
Review of Syllabus & Class Expectations

September 13  
**What Children, Youth, & Families Need**

**Required readings:**

**Recommended readings:**

**In-class exercise:** Describing and analyzing data

September 20  
**Evaluating Child, Youth, & Family Policy**  
**How to Be a Critical Consumer of Research**

**Required readings:**

**Recommended readings:**

**In-class exercise:** Practice critical research review
September 27

Interrogating the Causal Logic of Policy
Policy Logic Models

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

In-class exercise: Practice policy logic model

October 4

Child Welfare System

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

GUEST SPEAKER: Kristi Slack, Professor at UW-Madison SSW
Creating Safe Contexts for LGBTQ Youth: Within and Across System Needs and Challenges

**Required readings:**


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

**Due:** Policy Logic Model (Assignment 1)

Working with Children with Developmental Disabilities in Schools

**Required Readings:**

- TBD

**GUEST SPEAKER:** Kate Szidon, Waisman Center at UW-Madison

K-12 Education Policy

Promise Neighborhoods

**Required readings:**


**Recommended readings:**

November 1  

**Early Care and Education**

**Required readings:**

**Recommended readings:**

**Due: Critical Review of Research (Assignment 2)**

November 8  

**Work-Family Policies**

**Paid Family Leave and Work Scheduling Policy**

**Required readings:**

**Recommended readings:**
November 15  
**Neighborhoods & Housing Policy**

**Required readings:**

**Recommended readings:**

November 22  
**The U.S. Social Safety Net**

**Policy Interventions to Increase Family Income**

**Required readings:**

**Recommended readings:**

November 29  
**Policy Portfolio Presentations (Assignment 4)**

**Due December 5: Final Policy Portfolio for Presenters on 11/29**

December 6  
**Policy Portfolio Presentations (Assignment 4)**

**Due December 12: Final Policy Portfolio for Presenters on 12/6**
December 13

Policy Portfolio Presentations (Assignment 4)

Wrap-up and Review
Course Evaluations

Required readings:

Due December 19: Final Policy Portfolio for Presenters on 12/12

V. Reading Materials for the Course (See Weekly Class Descriptions)

See Weekly Class Descriptions for the required and recommended readings for each class, which can be accessed on Learn@UW. There is no textbook for this course. 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 and Grading

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>October 11 by 8am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88-93 surpasses expectations in most areas</td>
<td>November 1 by 8am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82-87 surpasses expectations in some areas</td>
<td>September 13-November 22 (see instructions below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>76-81 meets expectations in most areas; above in others</td>
<td>November 29, December 6, and December 13 (in class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-75 meets expectations in most areas</td>
<td>December 5, December 12, and December 19 by 11:59pm</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 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 policy logic model, critical review of research, 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 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 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 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 class sessions during the weeks of 9/13 through 11/22. 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 Monday preceding the Tuesday 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.
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:
  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

Attendance Policy
In order for you and your fellow classmates to benefit from this course, attendance and prompt arrival to class are expected. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. A significantly late arrival or early departure may be counted as an absence. If you are unable to attend class, please email the instructor as soon as possible and prior to class. 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. You may receive no more than two excused absences per semester. You will receive a warning for the first unexcused absence; two points will be deducted from your grade for each unexcused absence incurred after the first. 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.
**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.

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