I. Catalogue Description

This course provides an awareness of problems and concepts of the policy process in the U.S., exploring the political, economic, and institutional frameworks which structure public choices with regard to social welfare policy.

II. Course Overview

Social Work 206 is an undergraduate survey course available to undergraduate social work and social welfare majors and other interested students. Students will be introduced to alternative perspectives on social justice, 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 issue of poverty -- its (contested) definition, demographic scope (how poverty is distributed across groups) and alternative explanations for why poverty in the U.S. 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. Finally, a discussion of selected current issues in social policy will also be provided.

III. Objectives, Core Competencies and Practice Behaviors

<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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2: Apply SW ethical principles to guide professional practice</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
<td>Exam 1 Assignment 1</td>
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| 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, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues. | Exams 1 & 2 Assignment 1 |
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<tr>
<td>2.1.4: Engage diversity and difference in practice</td>
<td>• Recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power.</td>
<td>Exams 1 &amp; 2 Assignment 1</td>
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| 2.1.5: Advance human rights and social and economic justice | • Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination.  
• Engage in practices that advance social and economic justice. | Assignment 1 |
| 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. | Exam 1 Assignment 1 |
| 2.1.7: Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment | • Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation. | Exam 1 |
| 2.1.8: Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services | • Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being  
• Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action. | Assignment 1 |
| 2.1.9: Respond to contexts that shape practice | • Continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services | Exam 1 Assignment 1 |
| 2.1.10: Engage, assess, intervene & evaluate with groups, organizations, and communities. | • Substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.  
• Critically analyze, monitor and evaluate interventions | Exam 2 Assignment 1 |
### IV. Course Content and Readings (below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic/Theme</th>
<th>Activity / Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to Social Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Poverty and Inequality: The conceptualization and measurement of poverty &amp; inequality in the United States</td>
<td>Laura Cuesta, Guest Lecture -- Week 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 &amp; 6</td>
<td>Causes &amp; Consequences of poverty &amp; inequality: three theories of America’s level and distribution of poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Exam # 1 (and review)</td>
<td>Exam #1</td>
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#### Section I: Understanding and Analyzing Social Problems: The Case of Poverty and Inequality

#### Part II: Social Policy in an Evolving American Welfare State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic/Theme</th>
<th>Activity / Assignment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conceptualizing and Analyzing the U.S. Welfare State</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Social Insurance: Social Security, Unemployment and SSI</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Social Insurance: Health Care</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Public Assistance and Tax Expenditures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 &amp; 13</td>
<td>Case Study: The transition from AFDC to TANF</td>
<td>Laura Cuesta, Guest Lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Looking to the Future: the Neo-Liberal Welfare State and the Expansion of Incarceration as Social Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Exam #2</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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 lecture and discussion sessions having done the readings and being prepared to connect them to general themes of social problems and social policy. 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 that individuals & 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.
Readings

**INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A WELFARE STATE?**

**Week 1**

(1/21-23)


**SECTION I: THE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS:**

**PART A: DATA COLLECTION, MEASUREMENT, DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS**

Social Welfare policies address a wide variety of social problems – so many, that it would be impractical to try to survey them in a few weeks. Instead, we will look deeply at the “meta” problems of poverty and economic inequality, which not surprisingly underlie many, if not most, of the social problems that plague American society today.

**Week 2**

1/28-1/30

**Primer on Economics**

*Ever since the financial crisis of 2008 and its aftermath, it has become increasingly obvious that one cannot understand social policy without a rudimentary understanding of economics. We take an all-too-brief look here (please do the readings in the order that they are listed):*

*For the lecture on Tuesday, January 28, 2014:*

   - Chapter 1 (pp. 1-14): “The Economic Perspective”.


*For the lecture on Thursday, January 30, 2014:*

   - Chapter 1 (pp. 1-14): “The Economic Perspective”.


a. Chapter 5 (pp. 65-74): “Market Failure and Government Intervention”; Chapter 7 (pp. 89-98): “Government Failure”

If time permits.. Video on the Financial Crisis of 2008:


Week 3 2/4-6

**Economic Inequality Defined and Examined**


2. Explore the Economic Policy Institute’s State of Working America Website. http://www.stateofworkingamerica.org/features/view/1 focusing on tables and brief text in the following areas:
   - Income Inequality, Poverty, Wages and Compensation, Wealth, Mobility


Week 4 2/11-13

**The Measurement of Poverty and Recent dynamics of Poverty in the U.S.**

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s announcement of the war on poverty in his 1964 State of the Union address. The following readings provide a basic understanding on measurement issues, trends, and current debates on poverty in the U.S. (please do the readings in the order that they are listed):

For lecture on Tuesday, February 11, 2014:


For the lecture on Thursday, February 13, 2014:


Section I, Part B

THEORIES OF POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND THEIR REPRODUCTION OVER TIME

Week 5 2/18-20

Causes of poverty & inequality: Conservative and Liberal Perspectives

The Conservative View: Individual Choice within a broken welfare system:


The Centrist Liberal View: Human Capital Differences and Discrimination


Week 6 2/25-2/27

Causes of poverty & inequality: Social Democratic (or “Structural”) Perspective

The Left Liberal (aka: “Social Democratic” View: Structural Barriers (anchored in Class & Race)


Week 7 3/4-6

Exam #1

Review (3/4) and Exam (3/6)
SECTION II: SOCIAL POLICY IN AMERICA:

Week 8  Analyzing the social welfare system in the U.S: Do we live in a Residual Welfare State, an institutional Welfare State or are we somewhere in between?
3/11-13


To be distributed in class: Briefing notes on the U.S. Federal Government’s expenditures on social insurance, social development and public assistance programs

SPRING BREAK
No Classes on 3/18-20

Week 9  SOCIAL INSURANCE:
Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI).
3/25-27  OASDI


Week 10  Primer on Health Care and Health Care Reform
4/1-3  Medicare, Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act

Readings TBA
Week 11  **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE & TAX EXPENDITURES**
4/8-10


5. Urban Institute. (2011). Five questions for Donald Marron on about how cutting tax preferences is the key to tax reform. Washington, DC.

Week 12  **Analyzing a Social Welfare Program: The Transition from AFDC to TANF. The Impact of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996**
4/15-17


   a. NOTE: an updated version of the original summary by Liz Schott is now available at [http://www.cbpp.org/1-22-02tanf2.htm](http://www.cbpp.org/1-22-02tanf2.htm).

4. Read one of the following updates to TANF’s development and welfare politics and policy since original passage:

Week 13  **TANF: Its Effects and Reauthorization**
4/22-24


For the lecture on Thursday, April 24, 2014:


Week 14 Looking to the Future: The Neo-Liberal Welfare State and the prospect of Incarceration as Defacto Social Policy

Readings TBA

Week 15 Review for Exam #2

Exam #2 May 8 in class.

V. Texts and Reading Materials for the Course

There is no required text for this course.

- ARTICLES: available in electronic (PDF) form via the SW 206 “Learn@UW” web-page. Also copies of all non-linked articles will be available as a course reader, which can be purchased at Bob’s Copy Shop 208 N Charter St. Madison, WI 53715

Recommended, but not required:

- New York Times newspaper (Monday through Friday editions. Call 1-800-NYTIMES for
short/long term subscriptions). Also may be accessed on line at: http://www.nytimes.com

Course Web Site

Articles and additional class materials will be available on the class web site available through Learn@UW (https://learnuw.wisc.edu/). Use your net ID and password to logon. In addition, the web site will include:

1) Readings
2) Lecture Outlines (“slides”) — generally posted by 8 am on the day of the lecture;
3) Class Announcements and random postings of interesting news items by Lock and TAs (send in items you find to your TAs, they’ll post ‘em if appropriate!)
4) Exam Study Guides.

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:

>=94-100  A  Outstanding, surpasses expectations in all areas
>=88-93   A/B  Surpasses expectations in many areas
>=82-87   B  Meets expectations
>=76-81   B/C  Meets expectations in some areas but is below expectations in others
>=70-75   C  Below expectations in all areas, not acceptable graduate level work
>=64-69   D  Clearly unacceptable in all areas
<64      F  Fails to meet minimal requirements in all areas, not acceptable graduate work.

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

Exams: There will be two exams. The first covers section I of the course (weeks 1-6); the second covers section II (weeks 8-14). Exams will cover lectures, readings and material covered in discussion section. They will entail a combination of True/False, multiple choice questions, with a few very brief (one or two paragraphs) essay questions.
Make-up exams are available only to those students who: a) are unable to attend official exam sessions for a legitimate reason (e.g. members of UW varsity sports teams on team road trips) and b) notify the teaching assistant (Julie or Yeongmin) at least 48 hours prior to the exam.

Discussion Forum Assignment:

- We will distribute a full description of these assignments in week 1. Essentially, this set of assignments facilitates your active participation in on-line discussion boards (organized around each discussion section). Each week, the TAs will post a few “questions of the week” that center on consideration of one or more of that week’s themes/reading content, either by directing you to one of the readings for the week or toward some item drawn from the news or recent events that have some connection to Social Policy and/or the theme of the week. You will be asked to submit some number of direct responses to the questions of the week and to submit some number of responses to fellow students’ commentary. TAs will further clarify these short written assignments in discussion sections.

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>40 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>35 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forums (on-line)</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attendance and Class Participation Policy

In order for you and your fellow classmates to benefit from this course, attendance and active participation are expected. Attendance of lectures will be periodically taken, discussion section attendance will regularly be taken and your level of participated noted. Please notify your TEACHING ASSISTANT (not Eric) of any unavoidable absences.

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.

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 than ourselves. Each and every voice in the classroom is important and brings with it a wealth of experiences, value 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.
Additional Resources:

Week 1: Further reading on the meaning and function of the welfare state


Week 2: Additional readings on the U.S. Federal Government’s Budget Situation:


Week 2-3: Videos on America’s Financial and Fiscal Crisis:


Week 2-3: The Wisconsin Connection

- Andy Kroll (Mother Jones) reports on Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill and Protests: http://motherjones.com/mojo/2011/02/whats-happening-wisconsin-explained

Week 3: Additional Readings on Income and Wealth Inequality

- Focus on the Executive Summary and chapters 1,2, 7 & 8 (about 20 pages total).

Week 4: Video Presentations on Poverty & Inequality and the Structural Economic conditions underlying economic insecurity in America

- Young, Rick (producer) and Hedrick Smith (director), 2004. Is Wal Mart Good for America?
Week 6: Additional Readings on Culture of Poverty


A more sophisticated (sociological) understanding of the significance of discrimination


Week 7: Further Reading on Structural Views of Poverty and Inequality


Week 10: Further Reading on Social Security Reform


Week 11: Further Reading on the structure of U.S. public assistance programs


Week 12: Further Reading on Welfare Reform