Welcome to
SW 920: Child Youth and Family Policies and Services
Fall 2015

Instructor: Jamie Tester, LGSW, J.D.
Class Meeting Time: Saturdays 9:00am-1:00pm
Location: Room HSS, Room 202
Office Hours: By Appointment
Phone: 715-836-3718
Email: testerj@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 challenges, along with the needs of children, youth and families in the U.S. – while examining 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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2: Apply SW ethical principles to</td>
<td>Evaluating ethical dilemmas related to problems and issues related to children, youth and families.</td>
<td>All: Class Discussion of</td>
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<td>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>“The Wire” &amp; Mid-term paper</td>
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<td>2.1.3: Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments</td>
<td>Identifying and synthesizing multiple sources of knowledge to understand policy and practices issues related to children, youth and families.</td>
<td>All: Final Paper/Presentation</td>
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<td>2.1.4: Engage diversity and difference in practice</td>
<td>Demonstrating an understanding of how culture and values affect diverse conceptualizations and constructions of social problems and solutions related to children, youth and families.</td>
<td>Class Discussion of “The Wire” Mid-term paper Final paper/Presentation</td>
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<td>2.1.5: Advance human rights and social and economic justice</td>
<td>Appraising how mechanisms of oppression and discrimination impact various groups and outcomes relevant to children, youth and families.</td>
<td>Class Discussion of “The Wire” Mid-term paper Final paper/Presentation</td>
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<td>2.1.6: Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research</td>
<td>Critically evaluating and utilizing theoretical and empirical research relevant to the problems and/or populations addressed related to children, youth and families.</td>
<td>Class Discussion of “The Wire” &amp; Final paper/Presentation</td>
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<td>2.1.8: Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services</td>
<td>Evaluating, formulating, and advocating for policies that advance outcomes relevant to children, youth and families.</td>
<td>Letter to elected official &amp; Final paper/Presentation</td>
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<td>2.1.9: Respond to contexts that shape practice</td>
<td>Assessing the impact of historical and contemporary contexts on practice and policy related to children, youth and families</td>
<td>Final paper/Presentation</td>
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IV. Course Content

SECTION 1: Background

Understanding Children, Youth & Family in Ecological and Institutional Context

Week 1: Sept. 5
Topic 1: Course Overview
1. Introductions
2. My Goals for the Course
3. Syllabus/Assignments

Required Readings:
1. Syllabus

2. Eric Locke’s thoughts on argumentative memo/paper writing

Topic 2: What Children & Youth Need:
Required Readings:
1. Child Development Institute: Ages and Stages
   http://childdevelopmentinfo.com/ages-stages/

Topic 3: Challenges facing Children & Families in the U.S: The problem of Poverty and Economic Inequality

Required Readings:

Optional Readings
3. Annie E. Casey Foundation’s KIDS COUNT website

Week 2: Sept 12
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 19
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 26
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 3
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 10
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:
   http://scholarship.law.gwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1406&context=faculty_publications


**Week 7: Oct. 17**  
Topic 1: Work Supports, Child Care and Fatherhood Initiatives

**Required Readings:**

Topic 2: The Public Education System

**Required Readings:**
   http://reportcard.studentsfirst.org
2. TBA Focused on No Child Left Behind/Common Core

**Week 8: Oct 24**  
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 for purchase via Amazon.com or other on-line vendors; available for rent via Netflix.

3) **Watching The Wire: Resources**

   **HBO Home Page for The Wire:**

   **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/eNnjcmbO0CzLrTEnNd8xLzKksyUx2zs8rSa0oYS5kzlfPz0mBCQckpqlf6JeamsjiGySSeWluQX5CRW2pYUlazYmMjKyMQIAbAUXOA==
   **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>
</table>

Assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points/Percentages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Professional Conduct</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letter to Elected Official</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Discussion Wire</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term Paper</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading Small Group Discussion</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper/Final Presentation</td>
<td>40 points</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>110 points</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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 (10 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 an Elected Official (10 points)**
   **Due:** Saturday of week 2 by 9:00 am via dropbox on Learn@UW, **Length:** 1-2 pages single spaced (Professional letter format); **Value:** 10 pts.
   You will prepare a 1-2 page letter to an elected official of your choosing 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. You may draw from the readings for weeks 1 and 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 to assist in framing your argument.

2. **Class Discussion of The Wire (15 points)**
   **Due:** Saturday of week 3, 4 or 5 by 9:00 am via dropbox on Learn@UW, **Length:** 1-2 page memo. **Value:** 15 pts.
   For this short assignment, you will develop a 1-2 page memo where 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. **Value:** 20 pts.
   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 (15 points)**
   **Due:** Saturday of either week 6 or 7 via Dropbox on Learn@UW. **Value:** 15 pts.
   You and a partner will prepare and 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: Saturday, October 24 @ 11:59 pm via Dropbox on Learn@UW. Length: 8-10 pages.

   Value: 40 pts

   Instructions for final paper will be discussed during the first week of class with further instructions distributed prior to week 3.

   OR

   **Final Presentation (40 points)**

   Due: Saturday, October 24 during second part of class

   Value: 40 points

   - **Product 1:** Student will prepare a 1-3 page policy brief that must be submitted via Dropbox on Learn@UW by 9 am October 24
   - **Product 2:** Student will prepare a 10-15 minute presentation as though presenting to an elected official.
   - **Product 3:** Student will prepare a 1/2-1 page key points summary regarding the policy of discussion for the “elected official’s future reference”.

**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.

- 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

**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. Please see Professional Conduct Points above.
Excused & Unexcused Absences:
~ Students are expected to let the instructor know, at least a week in advance when possible, that they will miss a class; and at least before the start of class in the event of illness.
~ 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 the instructor will be in contact with students within 72 hours regarding how missed content will be conveyed to students and steps students may need to take. No make-up session will be scheduled.

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 (3) points for each day they are late. All assignments due to Dropbox are due prior to the start of class. If an assignment is submitted the same day, but after class has started it will be considered 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.