I. Course Description

This PhD seminar aims to expose students to diverse perspectives on social policy and social policy scholarship from a variety of disciplines and fields of study, as well as to provide a detailed understanding of the social policy landscape in the United States.

Attributes and Designations: This course fulfills a requirement for a policy seminar for the PhD in social welfare.

Requisites: The course is required for PhD students in social welfare and open to advanced MSW students and interested graduate students from other departments with instructor consent.

How credit hour is met: This class meets for one 3 hour class period each week over the fall semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, studying) for approximately 6 hours out of classroom each week. The syllabus includes additional information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

II. Course Overview

This PhD seminar aims to expose students to diverse perspectives on social policy and social policy scholarship from a variety of disciplines and fields of study, as well as to provide a detailed understanding of the social policy landscape in the United States. The course will focus on how various theoretical and methodological approaches shape the types of questions, analyses, and evidence that are commonly associated with a particular discipline or field of study. This will be accomplished by integrating a range of expert guest speakers, class discussions, and readings in disciplines such as demography, developmental psychology, economics, law, sociology, political science, public health, and public management, as well as cross-national perspectives. In addition, the course aims that students are informed and up-to-date on the primary domains of U.S. social policy as well as current trends, debates, and research developments in each. This will be accomplished through a series of student-led presentations and discussions. Note that an in-depth exploration of all domains of U.S. social policy is not possible in the context of a single course. As such, this course will prioritize social insurance and social assistance policies, as well as aspects of other policies that are particularly relevant to disadvantage populations. It will not, for instance, cover all aspects of education policy, tax policy, or labor market policy, though students are encouraged to pursue policy papers in these areas.
III. Learning Outcomes: Course Description and Objectives

After completing this course, students should demonstrate: (1) advanced knowledge of the major theoretical and empirical approaches to social policy from a range of disciplines and fields of study; (2) a solid understanding of major U.S. social policy domains, including specific policies and programs, trends, issues and debates, and research developments; (3) the skills to employ multi-disciplinary approaches to the study of social policy; and (4) the ability to summarize policy-related content and facilitate discussion thereof.

Course activities consist of: (1) active participation in seminar discussions; (2) summaries and analyses of required readings (3 short papers with accompanying class presentations); (3) policy paper; and (4) class presentation of policy paper.

IV. Texts and Reading Material

There are no required textbooks. All required readings will be posted on the class website at Canvas or available from the web approximately 2 weeks prior to their discussion in class. Note, however, that we will read all of the chapters in both volumes of:


Although the chapters are available from free download from the National Bureau of Economic Research website, as well as on the class Canvas website, you may wish to purchase these volumes.

V. Assignments and Evaluation

Grades: 50% short assignments; 25% class participation and presentations; and 25% final paper and preliminary products. This is a graduate seminar; the expectation is that the seminar will provide a collaborative learning environment. Academic honesty is a central requirement for graduate study. If a student intentionally misrepresents another’s work as their own, the student will receive no credit for the assignment and a final semester grade no higher than a C. Please review the School of Social Work guidelines on plagiarism (p. 32-33 of http://socwork.wisc.edu/files/PhDProgramGuidelines.pdf).

Short assignments. Each student will complete 4 short assignments. Two will consist of short essays (roughly 3 pages, no more than 4) for weeks in which we cover disciplines or fields (Developmental Perspectives, September 19; Cross-National Perspectives, September 26; Economic Perspectives, October 10; Cost-Benefit Analysis, October 31; Demographic/Sociological Perspectives, November 14). The essay should briefly summarize (roughly 1 page) and critique (roughly 2 pages) the key theoretical or methodological concepts presented in the readings for the week. These essays should be posted on the Canvas site by noon on the Monday of the week in which the perspective will be discussed. In addition, students are required to prepare questions for the guest speaker in weeks they write essays.

The other two assignments will consist of a summary of a specific policy domain and class presentation. This should be presented in outline/powerpoint, rather than paper form, and should serve as an overview of the particular policy, program, or policy area. It should explicitly address the following:

- What are the eligibility criteria for participation in the program? Is the program means/income tested? Is it categorical? Is it an entitlement program?
- How large is the program and what proportion of eligible individuals are served?
- How is the program administered and through which agency/agencies? What form does the benefit take (e.g., cash, near, cash, in-kind)? How generous is the benefit?
- How is the program funded and how much does it cost?
• What are the important recent trends in the program vis-à-vis population served, take-up rate, cost, etc.?
• What are the primary focus areas of debate vis-à-vis the policy, program, or policy area?
• What are the key recent policy or research developments in this area?

Note that the best place to start for many of these policies is the Green Book:


These summaries should be posted on the Canvas site by noon on the Monday of the week in which they will be discussed. In addition, the student will be responsible for (a) making a brief presentation (10-15 minutes) on the policy, program, or policy area, and (b) leading the class discussion on the policy, program, or policy area. Finally, multiple students will be assigned to each session, it is the students’ responsibility to coordinate who will cover which topics in terms of both the summaries and presentations.

Each of the four short assignments will be worth 12.5% of the final grade.

Class participation and presentations. Because much of the learning occurs during class time, students are required to attend every class or to receive approval in advance for not attending. In addition, students are expected to have carefully and critically read all assigned readings, and to be prepared to be active participants in the seminar and discuss all assigned readings each week. Students should notify the instructor in advance of class if they are unable to attend due to illness or emergency. Multiple absences will be counted against participation/presentation points, which constitute 25% of the final grade.

Policy paper. Students will select a policy topic of their own choosing on which to prepare a mid-length policy paper (10-12 pages). The paper should first provide background on the topic by documenting the major trends, issues, debates, and developments in the area (3-5 pages). It should then describe how theoretical or empirical approaches from at least three disciplines or fields of study might be applied to that topic and discuss the implications of such application vis-à-vis shaping the types of questions, analyses, and evidence employed, as well as implications for policy. These policy papers will be presented to the class during the final two weeks of the semester (December 5 and December 12, 2015). The final papers should be posted to Canvas by noon on Wednesday, December 19, 2018. A prospectus of the paper (roughly one page or less) is due in Week 7 (October 17).

VI. Expectations of Students and Instructor

Students are expected to:
• attend each class session, actively participate in the in-class discussions;
• carefully and critically read all required readings before coming to class;
• 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 needed for meeting class expectations (as approved by the McBurney Center);
• be respectful of other class members—a diversity of views and opinions may be articulated during discussions.

The instructors are expected to:
• assure that course objectives are being met;
• be available to students by appointment and to answer questions through email during business hours;
• give reasonable guidance on preparing assignments;
• be open to discussing concerns about the course;
• evaluate and return assignments in a timely manner.

VII. Course Content with readings (Tentative)

**Week 1, 9/5**: Introductions and course overview: Introductions and course overview: Review of U.S. social policy structure and domains; policy grid for child welfare policies and programs—Lonnie Berger

Required Readings:

More for those who want:

**Week 2, 9/12**: Overview of poverty and social welfare policies and programs in the U.S.—Lonnie Berger

Required Readings:


More for those who want:


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**Week 3, 9/19**: Developmental Perspectives—Katherine Magnuson (Yom Kippur: Lonnie will not be in class)

**Required Readings:**

**Week 4: 9/26**: Cross-National Perspectives—Tim Smeeding (IRP Annual Poverty Research and Policy Forum in DC: Lonnie will not be in class)

**Required Readings:**
- Smeeding, Timothy and Céline Thévenot. 2015. "International experiences in addressing child poverty—USA and other nations" Manuscript.

More for those who want:


**Week 5, 10/3:** Cash transfer programs for the elderly and disabled: OASDI and SSI

**Required Readings:**


More for those who want:


**Week 6, 10/10:** Economic Perspectives—John Mullahy

**Required Readings:**

**Week 7, 10/17:** Health Care Policies and Programs

**Required Readings:**

More for those who want:


**Final paper prospectus due**

**Week 8, 10/24:** EITC, SNAP, and UI
Required Readings:


More for those who want:


**Week 9, 10/31:** Cost-Benefit Analysis—David Weimer
Required Readings:

- Case Study: Shadow Pricing a High School Diploma.
- Read the benefit cost analysis of at least one program of interest from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost) and be prepared to discuss how WSIPP estimated costs and benefits.

**Week 10, 11/7:** TANF, Child Support Enforcement, and Employment and Training Programs

Required Readings:


More for those who want:

Week 11, 11/14: Demographic/Sociological Perspectives—Marcy Carlson

Required Readings:


Week 12, 11/21: Housing assistance, WIC, school meals programs

Required Readings:


Week 13, 11/28: Family leave and early childhood care and education

Required Readings:

- ACF website section on “about Early Head Start” ([https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hsc/tta-system/ehsnc/Early%20Head%20Start/about.html](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hsc/tta-system/ehsnc/Early%20Head%20Start/about.html)).


More for those who want:

**Week 14, 12/5:** Student Policy Paper Presentations

Required Readings:
- Draft papers

**Week 15, 12/12:** Student Policy Paper Presentations

Required Readings:
- Draft papers

**FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 19, 5:00 PM**

**VIII. RULES, RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES**
- See the Guide’s Rules, Rights and Responsibilities

**IX. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison’s community of scholars in which everyone’s academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/.

**X. ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus statement: “The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life.
Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.” [http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php](http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php)

XI. DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Institutional statement on diversity: “Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.” [https://diversity.wisc.edu/](https://diversity.wisc.edu/)