

**SWRK 711—CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL POLICY**  
**MSW Program, University of Pennsylvania**  
**SUMMER 2015**

Instructor:  
Phone:  
Email:  
Office Hours:

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course introduces students to the analysis of contemporary social welfare policy. The course focuses on four elements of the process through which social policies are developed:

- 1) The role of ideology and values in the definition of social problems
- 2) The legislative procedures that lead to the enactment of public policies
- 3) How advocacy and lobbying influence legislative outcomes and the roles social workers play in these activities
- 4) The challenges involved in implementing and evaluating social policies.

Several social welfare policy areas are used to illustrate these aspects of the policy process. As part of this course, students will select a policy of interest, and analyze that policy, using policy analysis frameworks and the components of the policy analysis process examined in the course.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

By the end of the semester, students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge and ability to apply critical thinking skills in the following areas:

- (1) How social welfare policies are developed and implemented, including administrative, legislative and judicial policies
- (2) How values and ideology shape the development of social welfare policies, relate to the value base of the profession, and reflect forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination related to class, race, gender, disability status, national origin, sexual orientation, and religion
- (3) The legislative policy development process, including the discovery and definition of social problems, policy formulation, and the role of party politics in legislative decision-making
- (4) How social media can be utilized in the policy process
- (5) The skills involved in lobbying and advocating for client groups and how lobbying organizations, including public interest groups and professional/industry/trade associations, can influence the policy development process

- (6) How social welfare policies are implemented and administered, including the regulatory, contracting and oversight roles of administrative agencies
- (7) The role of policy analysis and evaluation in the policy development and feedback process and the use of empirical evidence in those processes
- (8) How specific proposals have traversed the policy development process as regards several contemporary social welfare policy issues
- (9) The connection of the social work profession's values and ethics to the policy process
- (10) The research skills necessary to identify and analyze social policy proposals and legislation

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Students are required to prepare for class by reading the assigned materials in advance. Class attendance is required. Students are expected to participate actively in classroom discussions and to raise issues that emerge from the readings. Successful completion of the three policy assignments is required. Assignments are to be emailed by midnight on the due date. Written assignments constitute 85% of the grade, and class participation is 15% of the grade.

### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

There will be 2 major assignments that provide students with opportunities for reflection and integration of class readings and other material from field and practice. These assignments, described in detail below, are due on the dates indicated. Credit will not be given for late papers unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor.

#### **Twitter and Blog Assignment (50%)**

Students are required to create a Twitter account focuses on a specific social policy area (such as domestic violence or criminal justice policy). Students are expected to regularly update their Twitter accounts (at least twice a week). They should follow at least 50 relevant accounts, including all of their classmates. They should be interacting with other users, coming up with original tweets, as well as retweeting relevant information. Twitter accounts should be linked to their blog, but can also be linked to other social media accounts.

Students are required to write at least three blogs. Blogs should be 500-1000 words. One of the blogs may be done in video format (approximately 2 minutes). These blogs should be engaging as possible as can include things like pictures, gifs and videos. **They should not be in APA format.** Each time a blog is due, students are required to read and comment on at least 5 other blogs.

For the overall social media grade students will be evaluated on frequency and quality of Twitter updates; tweeting out of your blog post and interesting posts from your classmates' blog; clarity, informational content and relevance of blogs, and overall creativity utilized in both accounts.

Due Dates:

Twitter created and first blog: July 16th (5%)

Blog Comments: names to me on canvas and comment up by July 21st (5%)

Second blog July 30<sup>th</sup> (10%)

Blog Comments names to me on canvas and comment up by August 4<sup>th</sup> (5%)

Third blog: August 13<sup>th</sup> (10%)

Blog Comments and names to me on canvas and comment up by August 18<sup>th</sup> (5%)

Overall social media accounts August 7<sup>th</sup> (10%)

### **Policy Brief: Legislative History (30%)**

Summarize the legislative history of the policy. What were the main components of the legislation? Who proposed it and why? Who opposed it and why? What path (e.g., hearings, testimony, committee actions, advocacy efforts, conflicts and compromises) did the legislation take before it was finally voted upon? In this brief, describe the various stakeholders in the legislative process and analyze how their stake was evident in the process of deliberation, lobbying, testimony, public information and the legislature's vote/amendments. The brief may be up to 8 pages in length.

Draft due to peer: Monday August 3rd by midnight (cc me on the email)

Due Date: August 17<sup>th</sup> by midnight on canvas

### **Twitter Scavenger Hunter (5%)**

As a class we will decide on a policy area of interest to the Penn and surrounding community. You will be randomly assigned a team with your classmates. You will pick a team leader with a smart phone who will be in charge of tweeting for the team. You have from 1-3:30 on August 18<sup>th</sup> to interview students, faculty and members of the local community about why they support change around the issue or ideas they may have for change. You must interview at least 3 people. The final class we will review your tweets and judge which team had the most effective twitter campaign in terms of diversity of stakeholders and interesting videos/tweets. All teams who get at least 6 interviews will get full credit. Teams with the best tweets will win a bonus 2 points.

### **Class Participation (15% of your grade)**

Class participation is based on prompt attendance to class and your participation in large and small group discussions. You are expected to do all of the readings on a daily basis and come to class prepared to discuss the readings. If you will not be able to attend class, please

notify the instructor in advance by email. As part of your class participation grade, you will also be required to present on a current social policy issue and provide 2 or 3 discussion questions to encourage the class to make linkages between the current event and themes from the course or alternatively you will serve as a discussant on the readings- discussing what you see as the major points of the readings, any critiques you may have and posing 2 or 3 discussion questions to the class. You will sign up to for a presentation slot during the second class.

### **REQUIRED WEBSITE:**

Course readings may be accessed through the 611 canvas website.

Additional information relevant to this course may also be found on this website.

There is no bulkpack for the course. Students who have difficulties using the Blackboard site might consider downloading the readings to a portable media (CD, USB flash drive) and arranging to have them printed at a copy center of their choice.

### **COURSE OUTLINE:**

## **I. The Framing of Social Issues and Poverty Policy**

### ***Class 1: July 7<sup>th</sup> —Course Overview and Introduction***

- Review class objectives and assignments
- Situate social policy analysis within the context of welfare regimes
- Consider ways of conceptualizing social policy and framing policy analysis

E. A. Segal, "Analyzing and Researching Social Policy," [Chapter 6]. *Social Welfare Policy and Social Programs: A Values Perspective*, Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning, 2010 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), pp. 127-148.

### ***Class 2: July 9<sup>th</sup>: The role of Twitter in Social Activism Overview of Creating Blogs and Twitter/Intro to Legislative Research (bring laptops)***

- Learn how to create a blog and twitter account
- Discuss the possible drawbacks/challenge of using twitter and other forms of social media to enact social change

Uses of Twitter in the Occupy Movement <http://ojphi.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/4827/3846>

Unhashtagable [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lina-srivastava/unhashtagable\\_b\\_5688885.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lina-srivastava/unhashtagable_b_5688885.html)

Black Feminism and Hashtags <http://www.digitalamerica.org/black-feminism-hashtags-and-the-importance-of-twitter-to-american-studies-amanda-lineberry/>

***Class 3 July 14th—Federal Legislation: How Laws are made in the United States***  
***Guest Speaker: Dr. Julie Tenille***

- Review the legislative process in the federal government
- Distinguish the roles of the 3 branches of the government in the legislative process

National Association for the Education of Young Children (n.d.) Steps in Making a Bill a Law: The federal legislative process: [https://www.naeyc.org/policy/federal/bill\\_law](https://www.naeyc.org/policy/federal/bill_law)

Cahn, Matthew A. "Institutional and Noninstitutional Actors in the Policy Process." *Public Policy: The Essential Readings* (2013): 199-206  
[http://catalogue.pearsoned.ca/assets/hip/us/hip\\_us\\_pearsonhighered/samplechapter/0205856330.pdf](http://catalogue.pearsoned.ca/assets/hip/us/hip_us_pearsonhighered/samplechapter/0205856330.pdf)

***Class 4: July 16<sup>th</sup>: Agenda setting in the LGBT community-CLASS FROM HOME***

- Examine who gets to set the agenda and how demographics such as income, race, gender identity influence the process

Internal challenges facing the LGBT movement: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2015/02/09/the-internal-challenges-facing-the-lgbt-movement/>

An allies guide to issues facing the transgender community <http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/files/assets/resources/Allys-Guide-Issues-Facing-LGBT-Americans-Dec2012.pdf>

3 ways the gay rights agenda has perpetuated oppression  
<http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/12/3-ways-the-gay-rights-agenda-has-perpetuated-oppression/>

Watch: Pay it No Mind: The Life and Times of Marsha P. Washington

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjN9W2KstqE>

At 2pm on Thursday join in one hour of a live twitter chat addressing:

- How you see themes from the film resonating in modern policy issues/current debates
- How intersectionality of oppression played a role in Marsha's life
- How themes from the movie relate to themes in the readings

You must send at least 3 tweets and respond to at least one other person's tweets with the hashtag #payitnomind

*Class 5: July 21<sup>st</sup> Defining a Social Issue: The example of poverty and anti-poverty policy*

- Explore the complexities of defining poverty
- Examine how definitions of poverty lead to specific approaches to anti-poverty policy

“Definition of poverty.” <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/methods/definitions.html>

Guetzkow, J. (2010) Beyond Deservingness: Congressional Discourse on Poverty, 1964-1996. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 629, 173-197.

## **II. The Legislative Process and Health Policy**

*Class 6 July 23<sup>rd</sup>: Policy Approaches to Improving Health Outcomes*

- Review the history of health insurance in the US
- Examine the main components of the Affordable Care Act
- Explore the role of the judiciary system in the policy-making process
- Discuss the range of policy options to reduce health disparities

Kaiser Foundation Overview of Affordable Care Act:

<http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/8061-021.pdf>

Obamacare legal challenge: All you need to know: <http://www.newsweek.com/obamacare-legal-challenge-all-you-need-know-311269>

Lantz , P.M., Lichtenstein, R., & Pollack, H. A. (2007). Health policy approaches to population health: The limits of medicalization. *Health Affairs*, 26(5), 1253-1257.

Williams, D. R., & Collins, C. (2001). Racial residential segregation: A fundamental Cause of racial disparities in health. *Public Health Reports*, 116, 404-16

## **III. Advocacy & Lobbying and Child Welfare Policy**

*Class 7: July 28<sup>th</sup>— Social Work and Political Advocacy*

- Defining and challenging the notion of what it means to be an activist
- Examine what advocacy look like at the various stages of the political process
- Explore the potential roles for social workers in the political advocacy process

- Challenges do social workers and social work agencies face when engaging in advocacy

Luna, Y. M. (2009). Single welfare mothers' resistance. *Journal of Poverty*, 13(4), 441-461.

Mosley, J. (2013). Recognizing New Opportunities: Reconceptualizing Policy Advocacy in Everyday Organizational Practice. *Social Work*, 58, 231-239

### ***Class 8 July 30<sup>th</sup> Advocacy goals and child welfare policy***

- How have child welfare policy issues changed over time? Why?
- What role does advocacy play in the major pieces of federal child welfare legislation?
- Who are the major players and stakeholders – advocates, advocacy organizations, think tanks, and corresponding government organizations – in child welfare policy

Hoffman, E. (1978). Policy and politics: The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. *Public Policy*, 26(1), 71-88.

Andrews, K.T. & Edwards, B. (2004). Advocacy organizations in the U.S. political process. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30, 479-506.

### ***Class 9 August 4<sup>th</sup>—ASFAA: The role of ideologies and experts***

- Describe the ideological camps in child welfare policy
- How do “experts” use ideologies to frame policy issues

#### *Readings:*

Bartholet, E. (2004). The challenge of children’s rights advocacy: Problems and progress in the area of child abuse and neglect. *Whittier Journal of Child & Family Advocacy*, 3, 215-230.

Roberts, D. E. (2002). “The color of America’s child welfare system” [ch. 1] & “The system’s inferior treatment of black children” [ch.2], In *Shattered bonds: The color of child welfare* (pp. 3-25). Basic Books, NY.

Interview with Richard Gelles in “Failure to Protect: When should a parent lose the right to raise a child?” Frontline-PBS.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/fostercare/inside/gelles.html>

Interview with Martin Guggenheim in “Failure to Protect: When should a parent lose the right to raise a child?” Frontline-PBS.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/fostercare/inside/guggenheim.html>

#### **IV. Implementation and Evaluation and Criminal Justice Policies**

##### ***Class 10 August 6th—Overview of Policy Evaluation and Implementation/Peer Review Day***

- Examine how evaluations inform policy and programs
- Review the challenges of conducting policy evaluation
- Understand how local context influences policy implementation

Weisburd, D. (2000). Randomized experiments in criminal justice policy: Prospects and problems. *Crime and Delinquency*, 46, 181-193.

Lynch, M. (2011) Mass incarceration, legal change, and locale: understanding and remediating American penal overindulgence. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 673-698.

##### ***Class 11 August 11<sup>th</sup> Correctional Policy in the Age of Mass Incarceration***

- The overlap and competition between the goals of correctional policy (deterrence, retribution, restoration, removal from society, rehabilitation)
- The role of theory in evaluating correctional policy
- Race and gender considerations in evaluating correctional policy

Wacquant, L. (2002). The curious eclipse of the prison ethnography in the age of mass incarceration. *Ethnography*, 3, 371-397.

Cullen, F.T., and Gendreau, P. (2001). From nothing works to what works: Changing professional ideology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *The Prison Journal*, 81, 313-338.

##### ***Class 12: August 13<sup>th</sup> Social Policy and Military Service***

Guest Speaker: Sergeant

- Identification of deployment, post-deployment, and reintegration stressors
- Understanding health problem among service members and retuning OIF/OEF veterans
- Examine the Suicide Prevention for America's Veterans Act

McFarling, L, D'Angelo, M., Drain, M., Gibbs, D. A., & Olmsted, K. L. R. (2011). Stigma as a barrier to substance abuse and mental health treatment. *Military Psychology*, 23, 1-5.

Posey, S. (2009). Veterans and suicide: A review of potential increased risk. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 79, 368-374.

H.R.5048 - Suicide prevention for American Veterans Act



***Class 13 August 18<sup>th</sup> : Twitter Scavenger Hunt***

***Class 14 August 20<sup>th</sup>: Class wrap-up, judging the scavenger hunt and party***