SW 7620 Fundamental Principles of Social Welfare Policy (2 credits)

MASTER SYLLABUS

I. COURSE DOMAIN AND BOUNDARIES
This course will cover the fundamental principles of social welfare policy. It is designed to broaden the knowledge and skills acquired by students in the BSW Program as they transcend to the MSW Advance Standing Program. Topics will include a review of the policy-making process, analysis of social policies, and the history of Social Security in the United States. The course will demonstrate how social welfare policies impact social services and the community. Policy issues related to vulnerable groups will be discussed. Upon completion of the course students will be able to understand the interaction and interrelations between social work practice, research, and policy. Social work policy practice will be discussed throughout the course.

II. COMPETENCIES
While all competencies are important to policy practice only the highlighted ones will be benchmarked for this course.

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
2. Apply social work principles to guide professional practice
3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
4. Engage diversity and difference in practice
5. Advance human rights and social and economic justice
6. Engage in research-informed research and practice –informed research
7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment
8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services
9. Respond to contexts that shape practice
10. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
11. Analyze the impact of the urban context on a range of client systems, including practice implications

III. LEARNING OUTCOMES
BENCHMARK: Policy Brief Assignment
Students will be able to:

- show basic knowledge of political processes and social work involvement in political activities, advocacy groups, and/or organizational change, as part of their professional identity. (1A)
- develop skills necessary to participate in political activities advocacy, and organizational change that can lead to social welfare policy reform and promote social and economic justice. (1B)
- differentiate between personal and professional boundaries and employ ethical standards in their role with micro and macro systems. (1C)
- analyze social welfare policies utilizing a framework that incorporates professional social work values and societal beliefs and values as they apply to policy choices. (2A)
- identify gaps in social welfare policies and programs across local, state, national or international levels, with particular reference to social work values and ethics, and the unmet needs of vulnerable and oppressed populations. (2B)
- assess and compare U.S. social welfare policy with other countries that have similar and dissimilar economic structures. (3A)
- formulate and assess policy alternatives that address current gaps in service delivery. (3A)
- identify gaps in social welfare policies across local, state, national, or international levels with reference to social work values and unmet needs of vulnerable and oppressed populations. (4A)
- understand the development of social welfare from the poor laws to the welfare state viewed dynamically as a function of social, economic and political changes. (4A)
- develop skills necessary to participate in political activities advocacy, and organizational change that can lead to social welfare policy reform and promote social and economic justice. (4C)
- identify gaps in social welfare policies and programs with particular reference to social work values and unmet needs of vulnerable and oppressed populations. (4C)
- acquire basic knowledge of political processes and social work involvement in political activities, advocacy groups, and/or organizational change. (4D)
- comprehend the historical evolution of social work as an emerging profession engaged in the promotion of social welfare and social justice. (5A)
- develop skills necessary to participate in political processes, political activities, advocacy, and/or organizational change that can lead to social welfare policy reform and promote social and economic justice. (5B)
- develop skills necessary to participate in political processes, political activities, advocacy, and/or organizational change that can lead to social welfare policy reform and promote social and economic justice. (5C)
- demonstrate the skills necessary to analyze social welfare policies utilizing an analytic framework (e.g., Gilbert & Terrell) that incorporates scientific research, professional social work values and societal beliefs and values as they apply to policy...
choices concerning eligibility (who), type of benefit (what), delivery system (how), and source and type of funding (financing). (6A)

- identify trends in the development of the social welfare system and a broad range of income maintenance, health, and housing programs that will serve as a knowledge base for social work practice. (7A)
- demonstrate the skills necessary to analyze social welfare policies utilizing an analytic framework (e.g., Gilbert & Terrell) that incorporates scientific research, professional social work values and societal beliefs and values as they apply to policy choices concerning eligibility (who), type of benefit (what), delivery system (how), and source and type of funding (financing). (7B/10B).
- analyze the historical development of social welfare from the poor law to the welfare state viewed dynamically as a function of social, economic, and political changes. (8A/9A)
- analyze the political process and its influence on the formulation of social welfare policy and social work practice. (8A/9A)
- analyze the historical development of social welfare from the poor law to the welfare state viewed dynamically as a function of social, economic, and political changes. (10A)
- analyze the political process and its influence on the formulation of social welfare policy and social work practice. (10A)
- formulate and assess policy alternative that address current gaps in service delivery. (10C)
- assess and compare U.S. Social Welfare policy with other countries that have similar and dissimilar economic structures. (10D)

IV. PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
Student achievement of competencies will be assessed through three assignments: (1) class participation, (2) reflective journal, and (3) a policy brief.

V. TEXT AND REQUIRED READINGS
The required text for this course is:

Recommended Secondary Text:

Journal articles and other readings will be placed on Blackboard. They can be accessed by clicking the Course Readings icon.

V. ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE
The course is a bridge course offered between the completion of the BSW program and the start of the Advanced MSW program. The course is designed to refresh information concerning social work policy practice in preparation for advanced policy course. The course is offered in the summer term for four weeks. It meets for two hours three times a week. The format of the course is primarily lecture/discussion.

VI. ROLE OF THE STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR

The instructor is expected to facilitate learning by providing an environment that encourages students to maximize their natural talents and abilities. This includes: lectures, class assignments, and experiences which promote an atmosphere of intellectual curiosity and contemplation. The students however, are responsible for their own learning. They are expected to attend class regularly, complete all assignments to the best of their ability and seek help from the instructor in a timely manner if they encounter problems with the course.

Attendance Policy for Summer Bridge Courses:

With the understanding that some students may encounter a situation necessitating their absence from class, students are permitted one absence from this course before losing points from their grade. For each subsequent absence, students will lose three grade points. Due to a variety of reasons, such as weather conditions or traffic congestion, some students might occasionally arrive late. In consideration of such possibilities, students are permitted two late class arrivals before losing attendance points. For every subsequent late arrival, students will lose two points from their grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Points Deducted</th>
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<tr>
<td>One missed class</td>
<td>0 points deducted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Each subsequent missed class</td>
<td>4 points deducted</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 or 2 late arrivals/early departures/late returns following a break</td>
<td>0 points deducted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Each subsequent miss</td>
<td>2 points deducted</td>
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Please note: Late arrivals following a break and early departures are also subject to point deductions after the second such instance. If the point total for the number of missed classes, late arrivals, late returns following a break, and/or early departures exceeds ten, the student may not receive credit for the course irrespective of other performance criteria.

This policy is subject to modification at the Instructor’s discretion should a student’s life circumstances warrant alteration of the policy. Such circumstances may include severe illness of the student or immediate family member, or a death in the family. Should any
such situations occur, request for modification of the attendance policy must be discussed with the Instructor.

**Incompletes**
Incompletes, i.e., “I” grades are only given in extreme circumstances. The instructor must be apprised of the circumstances that prohibit the student from completing course assignments as outlined in the syllabus. These situations must be discussed well in advance of the end of the semester. The instructor reserves the right to determine if the circumstances are sufficient to justify an incomplete in the course. For further details, see the University statement on obligations of WSU faculty and students to the instructional process in the WSU Graduate Bulletin.

**SEVERE WEATHER CLOSURE POLICY**
According to the University’s Administrative Policy and Procedure Manual:

Wayne State University will close affected units when severe weather conditions compromise the safety of its students, faculty and staff, both at the University and in transit to or from the University. Generally, the University may be closed when severe weather conditions exist. Severe weather could consist of excessive accumulation of snow during a single snow period and/or prediction of excessive accumulation of snow, and excessive or dangerous accumulation of ice.

Closure will be publicized through the University Newsline (313-577-5345), WSU Homepage (www.wayne.edu), WSU Pipeline (www.pipeline.wayne.edu), WDET-FM (Public Radio 101.9) and by local radio and television stations. A message will also be sent to registered cell phones and email addresses using the Broadcast Messaging Services. If conditions are such that you suspect the University or School may be closed, please feel free to call the Newsline at the above listed number.

**VII. COURSE OUTLINE**

**Unit 1 – The nature of social policy**

Week One (sessions 1-3)

Unit 1 focuses on social policy as an aspect of generalist social work practice. The role that policy plays in direct practice is discussed. This unit deals with the process of policy-making and analysis. We examine how policy proposals become state or federal law. The socio-political and, economic factors that drive policy initiatives are discussed. Social work skills required to engage in policy-making activities are highlighted, with an emphasis on methods of researching
and analyzing social policies. The unit also examines the interrelation of research and practice as components of policy practice-related activities.

Readings:

The Handbook of Social Policy – Part 1 pp. 3-100.

“Why Policy Analysis is Relevant to Direct Practice Service Practitioners” in Dimensions of Social Welfare Policy, pp. 27-29.


Unit 2 – The history of social welfare

Week Two (sessions 4-6)

Unit 2 covers the historical evolution of social policies within the US. Students will become acquainted with the most critical events in American social policy formation prior to the passage of key social policies (e.g., Social Security Act of 1935) and discuss how social, economic, and political conditions in the country impacted these policies.

Unit 3 – Theoretical perspectives and social policy

Week Three (sessions 7-9)

Unit 3 focuses on ideological beliefs policies are based. This includes approaches to policy analysis are examined, including models used theoretical frameworks for understanding policy issues related to four vulnerable groups: children, the elderly, disabled and the mentally ill, because policy concerns related to these groups are representative of the policy concerns of all similarly vulnerable groups in the U.S. The unit will begin with a discussion of the historical evolution of policy for the group and end with a discussion of current concerns and
controversies. In the course of the unit, policies and programs for the groups are described, and the impacts of entitlement programs are highlighted.

Unit 4 – Social problems and social policies Integrating Policy, Research, and Practice
(Week Four – (sessions 10-12)

Unit 4 focuses on social policy as an aspect of generalist social work practice. The role that policy plays in direct practice and advocacy is discussed. Social work skills required to engage in policy-making activities are highlighted, with an emphasis on methods of researching and analyzing social policies. The unit also examines the interrelation of research and practice as components of policy practice-related activities.

Unit 1 – History of the American Social Security System

Week One (sessions 1-3)

Unit 1 covers the historical evolution of the Social Security Act from 1935 to the present. This act is important because it establishes the basis of the American Welfare State. The social, economic, and political conditions in the country prior to the passage of the act are discussed. Its policy objectives are identified and evaluated. We will critically analyze the controversies among policymakers after the passage of the act and examine government policies that necessitated modifications and amendments to the original act over the years. The evolution of programs for vulnerable populations such as the disabled, children and the elderly are described, and the positive and negative impacts of the Social Security Act on women and minority groups are analyzed.

Readings:


Unit 2 – Social Policy-making and Analysis

Week Two (sessions 4-6)
This unit deals with the process of policy-making and analysis. We examine how policy proposals become state or federal law. The socio-political and, economic factors that drive policy initiatives are discussed. Approaches to policy analysis are examined, including models used.

Readings:


Unit 3 - Policy Issues Related to Vulnerable Groups

Week Three (sessions 7-9)

Unit 3 focuses on policy issues related to four vulnerable groups: children, the elderly, disabled and the mentally ill, because policy concerns related to these groups are representative of the policy concerns of all similarly vulnerable groups in the U.S. The unit will begin with a discussion of the historical evolution of policy for the group and end with a discussion of current concerns and controversies. In the course of the unit, policies and programs for the groups are described, and the impacts of entitlement programs are highlighted.

Readings:


Unit 4 - Integrating Policy, Research, and Practice

(Week Four – (sessions 10-12)
VIII. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Assignment #1 – Reflective OnLine Journal (40 Points)

Students are required to keep an electronic record of each class session in an online journal in Blackboard. The journal entries should include a summary of the lecture/discussion, an annotated summary of the readings, and a reflective statement on an aspect of the session that interests the student.

Each entry should be 3-5 pages long. The journal will be submitted weekly for grading by the instructor. The criteria for grading are completeness of the journal, accuracy of the entries, and depth of analysis.

Assignment #2 – Policy Brief† (50 Points)

Students must write a policy brief of 6-8 pages long on a controversial social welfare topic of their choice. "The policy brief is a document which outlines the rationale for choosing a particular policy alternative or course of action in a current policy debate." (1)

The policy brief should be written in APA style and include the following:

1. Title of Paper
2. Executive summary
3. Context and importance of the policy issue*
4. Critique of policy issue(s)

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† Policy Brief - www.policy.hu/ipf/fel-pubs/sample/policybrief
5. Policy recommendations
6. Appendices
7. Sources consulted or recommended

* A list of controversial issues will be furnished by the Instructor.

Each assignment will be given a numerical grade and corresponding letter grade. Grading is as follows:

1. Class attendance/participation = 15 pts
2. Reflective Journal = 40 pts
3. Policy Brief = 45 pts

**Grading Scale**

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