This seminar provides a focused introduction to public assistance policy in the United States. We will discuss basic conceptual issues related to the design and evaluation of public assistance policy, and students will have an opportunity to apply their policy analysis skills to a social policy issue of their choice. However, for most of the seminar we will focus on family policy, broadly defined. Topic areas will include Welfare, Child Support, Child Welfare/Child Protective Services, and income support for the elderly.

We will consider how public policy responds to, and shapes, expectations regarding the relative responsibilities of government and individuals/families. On what basis do public institutions provide assistance or otherwise intervene to alter available resources, especially for children and the elderly? How has policy evolved to increase or reduce public (as opposed to private or family) responsibility? What accounts for policies that by design or practice disproportionately target low income families?

Assignments and Grading

Seminar participants are expected to:

- complete assigned readings prior to the seminar meeting
- write six one page critiques of the readings (not in the same week as a seminar paper/presentation)
- write two short papers (5-8 pages, double spaced) in weeks 6, 8, 10 and/or 12
- prepare a final presentation to be made in weeks 14 or 15
- write a final paper (details below) on your presentation topic, due in week 15.

Note that you have a writing assignment due almost every week, since critiques may not be written in the same week you submit a short paper or make a final presentation, nor in Week 1 or Week 13-15.

Final grades will be based on the 2 seminar papers (20% each, 40% total), critiques and seminar participation (20% total), and final presentation and paper (15% and 25%; 40% total).

Seminar papers: Participants are expected write a paper for two of the four topics covered in weeks 5-12. Details on the topics and format will be discussed in class. Seminar papers generally will not require additional readings or outside research. The papers will be due 24 hours prior to the second meeting on the topic (i.e. on Monday at 10 AM in weeks 6, 8, 10 and/or 12) and should be sent by e-mail to the instructors (mcancian@wisc.edu and vychung@wisc.edu). You may choose to write a paper in any two of the four assigned weeks. Papers delivered up to 24 hours late will lose 10 percent; no papers will be accepted after the seminar meeting. If experience suggests that circumstances sometimes compromise your ability to complete assignments on schedule you are strongly encouraged to plan on writing papers earlier in the semester—so you have the flexibility to delay if necessary.
Reading critiques should be a single page, about half devoted to integrative summary comments, and about half to critical responses or questions. These critiques should be completed by 10 am Monday, and sent by e-mail to the instructors (mcancian@wisc.edu and yychung@wisc.edu). Critiques will not be graded, but will count for full, partial, or no credit. The first two critiques will be returned to you in class; for later weeks you will receive an e-mail no later than the day of class if the critique did not earn full credit.

Final presentation and paper The last two meetings of the course will be devoted to presentations on topics and/or theoretical frameworks that were not previously covered in detail. Suggested topics include health care, child care, marriage, or an analysis of an earlier topic from a new perspective—for example, using a international/comparative analysis, or introducing and applying a novel theoretical perspective. Students are welcome to work individually or in groups to prepare the presentation and/or paper. An individually written final paper should be about 10 pages. The parameters for group projects should be negotiated with the instructor in advance. Proposals for the final presentation and paper topic are due no later than in class on 11/17.

Provisions for cancelled classes and absences

The University has asked all instructors to make provisions for the possibility that a flu pandemic or other circumstances may interfere with seminar meetings or with an individual student’s or instructor’s participation. If the University is closed, or there are other factors that interfere with our meeting in person, please check your e-mail for more information. If seminar cannot be held in person we will likely “meet” by phone. Most class papers/assignments are turned in electronically and so will not be affected by a disruption of class meetings.

If you do not feel well you are encouraged to stay home and not attend class (see: http://flu.wisc.edu/2009/05/01/what-if-i-have-to-miss-class-due-to-illness/ for more information on related University policy). Given the flexible due dates for almost all written assignments, most students should not require special accommodation for a brief illness, but please contact the instructor as soon as possible if you will miss class or if an illness will interfere with completing written work.
Class Schedule

Week 1 (9/8) Chronology and terminology: U.S. social policy since 1930
• Readings:
• Assignment options:
  o No reading critiques this week

Week 2 (9/15) Microeconomic analysis of social policy
• Readings:
  o Blank, R. 2003. Poverty, Policy and Ethics: Can An Economist be Both Critical and Caring?
Optional readings: (The content is required, but the readings are only required if this is unfamiliar material).
• Assignment options:
  o Reading critiques (due 10 a.m. Monday)

Week 3 (9/22) Power: class, race, gender and social policy
• Readings:
Optional reading:
  o Wax, Amy L. 2009. "Basic Income or Caretaker Benefits?," Basic Income Studies: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1, Article 3, available at: http://www.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1118&context=bis. (Note: not included in reader)

• Assignment options:
  o Reading critiques (due 10 a.m. Monday)

Week 4 (9/29) Power and Politics (Yiyoon Chung Guest Lecturer):
  • Readings:
  • Assignment options:
    o Reading critiques (due 10 a.m. Monday)

Week 5 (10/6) Welfare Part 1: History and current policies
  • Readings:

Optional reading:

• Assignment options:
  o Reading critiques (due 10 a.m. Monday)
Week 6 (10/13) Welfare Part 2: Alternative analyses and implications for policy

- Readings:

- Assignment options:
  - Seminar paper (due 10 a.m. Monday)
  - Reading critiques (due 10 a.m. Monday)

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Week 7 (10/20) Paternity and Child Support Part 1: History and current policies

- Readings:

- Assignment options:
  - Reading critiques (due 10 a.m. Monday)

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- Readings:

- Assignment options:
  - Seminar paper (due 10 a.m. Monday)
  - Reading critiques (due 10 a.m. Monday)

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Week 9 (11/3) Child Welfare Part 1: History and current policies
Readings:

Optional Reading:

Assignment options:
- Reading critiques (due 10 a.m. Monday)

- Readings:

Assignment options:
- Seminar paper (due 10 a.m. Monday)
- Reading critiques (due 10 a.m. Monday)

**Week 11 (11/17) Social Security Part 1: History and current policies**
- Readings:

Optional Reading:

Assignment options:
• Reading critiques (due 10 a.m. Monday)

Assignment:
• Proposal for final paper due in class

**Week 12 (11/24) Social Security Part 2: Alternative analyses and implications for policy**

**Readings:**
  [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310598_Straight35.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310598_Straight35.pdf)

**Assignment options:**
- Seminar paper (due 10 a.m. Monday)
- Reading critiques (due 10 a.m. Monday)

**Week 13 (12/1) Catch up and review**
- Assignment options: No reading critiques this week

**Week 14 (12/8) Student presentations; Topics/Readings TBA**
- Assignment options: No reading critiques this week

**Week 15 (12/15) Student presentations; Topics/Readings TBA**
- Assignment options: No reading critiques this week
- Assignment: Final paper due in class