Columbia University School of Social Work

T6801: Social Welfare Policy
Fall 2007

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(or by appointment)

Required texts:

Books: The following required books can be purchased at the Columbia University Bookstore:


Expectations:

1. Class participation. Students are expected to attend each class, to prepare for each class by doing the required reading, and to participate in class discussion.

2. Assignments. There will be four assignments: two short papers that summarize and critique class readings (each worth 15% of the grade, see below); an in-class midterm consisting of multiple choice and essay questions on week 7 (35% of grade); and a final in-class exam consisting of multiple choice and essay questions on the last day of class (35% of grade).

Short paper assignments: Students will be asked to select two of the class topics and write a brief paper summarizing and critiquing the key concepts for all of the required readings on that topic. The papers are due on the day the selected topic is presented in class, and students should be prepared to guide and actively engage in class discussion. Each paper should summarize and critique the entire set of required readings. The summary should briefly state the author’s purpose (what the author was trying to do) and highlight the key points made. The critique should include a statement of the reading’s strengths (what the author did well, and why it is important) and the reading’s weaknesses (what the author did not do well or failed to do, and why it is important) and should also compare and contrast the readings’ strengths and
weaknesses. The maximum length of the summary papers is 4 pages, double-spaced, in 12-pt sized type. Late papers will not be accepted. Please see class hand-out with more detailed guidelines.

3. 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 as stated in the CUSSW Student Handbook and CUSSW Bulletin.

Useful Websites:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities – www.cbpp.org
Center for Law and Social Policy – www.clasp.org
Century Foundation – www.tef.org
Child Trends – www.childtrends.org
Future of Children – www.futureofchildren.org
Institute for Research on Poverty (University of Wisconsin) – www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp
Luxembourg Income Study (cross-national research) – www.lisproject.org
MDRC (welfare experiments) – www.mdrc.org
National Center for Children in Poverty – www.nccp.org
National Poverty Center (University of Michigan) – www.npc.umich.edu
UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (children) – www.unicef-icdc.org
Urban Institute – www.urban.org
U.S. Census Bureau (population info and poverty statistics) – www.census.gov
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:
  Administration for Children and Families – www.acf.hhs.gov
  Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation – www.aspe.hhs.gov
T6801: SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY

Course Description, Objectives and Major Content Themes

Course Description

The policy foundation course is designed to meet a series of objectives. It is central to students’ preparation as social workers and provides a critical context for education as social work practitioners as well as relevant policy background for subsequent field-of-practice courses. The overarching goals of this course are that students learn about the major social policies and programs that affect people’s well-being or quality of life and various aspects of social service delivery; understand the ways in which direct social work practice enacts social policies and is shaped by them; and develop beginning expertise in understanding social policy content, policy actions of agencies, professional associations, and political bodies, and the skills needed to influence social policy.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of T6801, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the “social sector” in the U.S. (non-market transfers, goods, and services) through examination of the welfare state and the economic, social, and political context of the U.S.

2. Explain basic historical, intellectual and cross-national perspectives on current U.S. social policy issues.

3. Discuss how public policy affects the level and structure of resources available to meet the needs of clients.

4. Identify how social justice and social work practice fit within the policy context (“practice enacts policy”).

5. Use the knowledge gained in objectives 1 through 4 to practice more effectively.

Major content themes

The major content themes of T6801 include:

1. **The social work profession**: history, mission, philosophy, and methods.


3. **Targets of social policy**: social problems (e.g., poverty and inequality, domestic violence, homelessness) and populations at risk (e.g., the aged, children, women, people of color, gay men, lesbians, persons who are disabled).
4. **Organization and structure of social policies** (including federalism, public and private sector roles).

5. **Major social policies and programs.**

   **Income transfer/income maintenance:** the social insurance programs (OASDI, UI), public assistance, food stamps, tax benefits, employer fringe benefits.

   **Health policy and programs:** Medicare, Medicaid, maternal and child health, private health insurance.

   **The personal social services** of particular interest to social work: categorical and non-categorical services for the aged, children and their families, the disabled, etc.

   **Introductory overview of three other systems:** employment, housing and education.
T6801: Social Welfare Policy

Topical Course Outline

9/5  1. Course overview and introduction to social welfare policy

Overview of the course and assignments; the relevance of social welfare policy for social work practice; and the historical role of the social work profession in policy development, advocacy and implementation.

9/12  2. The current social welfare system

Definition and goals of social welfare policy; capitalism, socialism and welfare states; overview of the size and composition of the American social welfare system; major programs; expenditures; beneficiaries; cash versus in-kind benefits; federalism with state and local variation; universal versus targeted approaches (means-testing); comparison to other Western nations.

U.S. SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY – HISTORY AND CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES

9/19  3. History of U.S. social welfare policy I (through the New Deal)

Poor relief; the growth and transformation of the poorhouse; the Progressive era; changing perspectives on children; the role of social workers; family preservation versus placement; the establishment of “mother’s pensions;” the Great Depression and the New Deal; emergency relief and public works; the role of social workers; the Social Security Act and the establishment of Aid to Dependent Children, Unemployment Insurance and Social Security.

9/26  4. History of U.S. social welfare policy II (through the Reagan Administration)

The War on Poverty, including the growth in AFDC, expansion of Food Stamps, introduction of health insurance coverage and other categorical programs (such as Head Start); subsequent expansion of social services (e.g. Title XX); the welfare rights movement and the war on welfare; the Family Support Act; and state demonstrations.

10/3  5. Social, economic and demographic trends in the U.S.

Recent trends that affect poverty, inequality and the need for public assistance.

10/10  6. Definition of poverty and trends in poverty

The definition and measurement of poverty; the official U.S. poverty line and alternative definitions; the treatment of cash and non-cash transfers; recent overall poverty trends and by race/ethnicity, age and family type.

10/17  7. IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM
SPECIAL TOPICS IN SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY

10/24  8. The Clinton welfare reform bill and its aftermath (including TANF & food stamps)

Clinton’s pledge to “end welfare as we know it;” first version of Clinton reform and its architects; the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and its critics; consequences of 1996 law for welfare participation rates, employment, poverty, family formation, and child wellbeing; key perspectives on U.S. welfare policy.

10/31  9. Welfare reform (cont.)/The working poor

Definition of the working poor; trends; key issues (child care, transportation, EITC); types of available assistance.

11/7  10. The underclass, concentrated urban (“ghetto”) poverty, and housing/homelessness

Defining the underclass and “ghetto” poverty; trends; hypotheses about the development of the underclass; policy options; issues related to housing and homelessness.

11/14  11. Single mothers, child support, and current perspectives on family formation, marriage and “fragile families”

Effects of family structure on children; policy issues and options related to single mothers, including child support enforcement; public policy efforts to alter—or redress the consequences of—changing family demography; unmarried parents and their children; marriage education/promotion programs.


Trends in child abuse and neglect, foster care; child protection and child welfare policies; child and family services; what children need, and interventions to promote child wellbeing.

11/28  13. Health care structure and reform

Trends and policy issues related to providing health care for the children, working-age adults and the elderly.

12/5  14. The elderly, Social Security and other social insurance programs

Growth in the elderly population; programs for the elderly, especially Social Security (structure, costs and trends); reform ideas and proposals; description of Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income programs.

12/12  15. IN-CLASS FINAL EXAM
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Required Assigned Readings

(Readings with an asterisk [*] are from books to be purchased at the University bookstore. All other readings are available on-line via Library Reserves, E-journals, and/or by direct link.)

9/5  1. Course overview and introduction to social welfare policy

9/12  2. The current social welfare system


   *Schiller, Bradley R. The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination, Chapters 1, 13-14.


U.S. SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY — HISTORY AND CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES


10/3  5. Social, economic and demographic trends in the U.S.


10/10  6. Definition of poverty and trends in poverty

http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty06.html


http://www.heritage.org/Research/Welfare/BG1713.cfm

*Schiller, Bradley R. The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination. Chapters 2-4.

10/17  7. IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

SPECIAL TOPICS IN SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY

10/24  8. The Clinton welfare reform bill and its aftermath (including TANF & food stamps)

Part of video in class – “Ending Welfare As We Know It”

http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=welfare_redux


http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900980_welfarereform.pdf

10/31  9. Welfare reform (cont.)/The working poor


*Schiller, Bradley R. The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination, Chapter 6, “The Working Poor.”
11/7  10. The underclass, concentrated urban ("ghetto") poverty, and housing/homelessness


*Schiller, Bradley R. The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination. Chapter 9, “The Underclass: Culture and Race.”

11/14  11. Single mothers, child support, and current perspectives on family formation, marriage and “fragile families”

Part of video in class – PBS Frontline: “The Vanishing Father”


*Schiller, Bradley R. The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination. Chapter 8, “Family Size and Structure.”

Explore the website for the Healthy Marriage Initiative, Administration for Children and Families, Dept. of Health and Human Services: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/
**11/21  12. Child welfare, child protection, and promoting child wellbeing**

http://ndas.cwla.org/include/pdf/ChildAbuseNeglect_Final_IB.pdf


http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311351_vulnerable_families.pdf


**11/28  13. Health care structure and reform**

http://assets.aarp.org/rgecenter/health/medicare_40.pdf


http://www.heritage.org/Research/HealthCare/upload/hl_1030.pdf

http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411317_lack_health_ins.pdf


**12/5  14. The elderly, Social Security and other social insurance programs**


*Review Schiller, Chapter 14.*

12/12  15. IN-CLASS FINAL EXAM

Revised: September 1, 2007