

The University of Texas at Austin  
School of Social Work

Course Number:	SW 323K	Instructor's Name:	Jemel Aguilar, Ph.D., MSW.
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### SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS, POLICIES, AND ISSUES

#### *Course Description*

This course is in the social policy curriculum area required for undergraduate program majors, and is designed to provide students with the ability to analyze contemporary social welfare policy issues and programs and to understand the relationship between social policy and social work practice. The course focuses on historical, economic, political, and other social conditions that influence policy development in the United States. Specific social problems and policy areas discussed are those in which social workers play major roles: income maintenance (with a focus on social insurance and public assistance), health, mental health, child welfare, and aging. Policy issues and programs are addressed as they affect major groups as well as vulnerable populations (e.g. people of color, people with disabilities, women and children, and the elderly) with a particular emphasis on social and economic justice. Students will learn to use policy analysis tools in order to understand how policy influences practice and planning decisions and how social workers can influence social welfare policy.

Pre-requisites for this course include Government 310L and 312L (or their equivalents), an introductory economics course, and SW 310 (the first course in the policy sequence.)

**Note on safety:** As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should also notify instructors regarding any safety concerns.

**Note on UT disability policy:** Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

## *Course Objectives*

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Articulate why our understanding of social policy is essential to performing social work responsibilities and understanding the issues;
2. Define social policy from a variety of perspectives;
3. Discuss and interpret the historical development of social policy and the impact of economics, politics, and social values on policy formation in the U.S. and the ways that issues of diversity (such as culture, class, gender, physical or mental stability, age) have been addressed;
4. Apply conceptual frameworks for analyzing the development of social welfare policy;
5. Define key concepts in social welfare policy (e.g. universal, residual, public assistance, social insurance, cash, in-kind);
6. Identify and explain contemporary issues in the development of social welfare policy (e.g. centralized and decentralized policy-making, types of transfers, alternatives for addressing social welfare concerns), including values and ethical dilemmas;
7. Apply relevant research frameworks for evaluating the effects of social welfare policy on national, state, and local populations and economically vulnerable **SUB**-groups;
8. Analyze the impact of social welfare policy in terms of social and economic justice (i.e. differential effects on minority groups and vulnerable populations including ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, women, gay men and women, etc.);
9. Discuss issues and apply theoretical frameworks related to the policy areas of income maintenance, health, mental health, child welfare, and aging;
10. Analyze the roles social workers play in the formation of social policy and the effects of social policies on social work practice;

## *Teaching Methods*

The method of the course is founded upon student participation. As professional advocates, it is essential for credentialed social workers to be able to articulate ideas clearly and persuasively. All students are encouraged to participate through discussions in class, via e-mail, or with the instructor or teaching assistant during office hours. The format will include lectures, videos, guest presentations, weekly readings, framed discussions, group exercises, and student briefings.

### *Required Readings*

Blau, J. (2007). *The dynamics of social welfare policy*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). (2001). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

### *Course Requirements*

There are no in-class midterms or final exams. Students will be graded on a series of proportionally weighted requirements, including:

- A) Weekly Quizzes (40%)
- B) Political candidate's policy analysis (40%)
- C) Political action (20%)

## **COURSE CONTENT AND ASSIGNMENTS**

Week 1: Introduction and overview

Readings for next week:

Blau, J. Chapter 1 & 2

Popple, Phillip R. Social work profession: History. In *Encyclopedia of Social Work*

Week 2: What is social welfare policy? The cycle of social welfare history and policy

Readings for next week:

Blau, J. Chapter 7

Segal and Brzuzy chapter history chapter handout

Moynihan, D. P. (1965). *The Tangle of Pathology*. Chapter 4 in *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*. Available:  
<http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/history/moynchapter4.htm>

Week 3: Highlights and history of social welfare policy

Readings for next week:

Blau, J. Chapter 6

Week 4: Social movements and social change

Readings for next week:

APA manual chapters 1 & 2  
Eibinder - Policy analysis  
Policy Practice article

**Quiz**

Week 5: Social welfare policy analysis

Readings:

APA manual chapters skim references chapter and Appendix D

Lagana-Riordan, C. & Aguilar, J. P. What's missing for No Child Left Behind? A policy analysis from a social work perspective. Submitted to *Children & Schools*.

Week 6: Additional frameworks for analyzing social welfare policy

To be handed out

**Elevator speeches each week until the end of the semester**

Week 7: Ideological conflicts,

Readings:

Blau, J. Chapter 5

APA manual chapters 4 & 5

**Quiz**

Week 8: Spring Break,

Readings for next week:

Blau, J. Chapter 8,

Mendenhall, A. M. (2006). A guide to the Earned Income Tax Credit: What everyone should know about EITC. *Journal of Poverty*, 10(3), 51-68.

Wright, E. O. (2006). Two redistributive proposals: Universal basic income and stakeholder grants. *Focus*, 24(2), 5-7.

Week 9: Application: Economy

Readings for next week:

Christopher, K. (2005). The Poverty Line Forty Years Later: Alternative Poverty Measures and Women's Lives. *Race, Gender & Class, 12*(2), 34-53.

Lichtenwalter, S. K., G., & Sales, E. (2006). Examining transportation and employment outcomes: Evidence for moving beyond the bus pass. *Journal of Poverty, 10*(1), 93-115.

Week 10: Application: Income support,

Readings for next week:

Blau, J. Chapter 9,

**Op-ed due**

Week 11: Application: Jobs and job training,

Readings for next week

Blau, J. Chapter 10,

Boushey, H. (2005). No Way Out: How Prime-age Workers Get Trapped in Minimum-Wage Jobs. *Journal of Labor and Society*.

Week 12: Application: Housing

Readings for next week

Blau, J. Chapter 11,

Marmor, T., & Mashaw, J. (2006). Understanding Social Insurance: Fairness, Affordability, and the Modernization of Social Security and Medicare. *Health Affairs, 25*, 114-134.

**Quiz**

Week 13: Application: Healthcare,

Readings for next week:

Blau, J. Chapter 12,

Week 14 - Application: Food and Hunger,

**Policy analysis due**

Week 15 - Week of Last classes,

**Quiz**

## ***Group Presentations***

### *Quizzes (40 points)*

Students will be tested throughout the semester on the reading content. These questions will occur during the 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 12, 15<sup>th</sup> weeks of classes and will be cumulative. The purpose of these quizzes is to assess your ability to integrate the readings and assignments. Each quiz is worth 10 points and will consist of short answer questions, multiple choice questions, and identifying the definitions of important terms and concepts. **There are no make up quizzes.**

### *Political candidate's policy analysis (40 points)*

This November some citizens in the United States will be voting in a new cadre of officials that will determine public policy for the next few years. These elections are occurring on the local as well as federal levels and will have impact on our social and economic lives. In light of this opportunity, in groups of two, you are to:

1. Identify one issue that a candidate of your choice is discussing,
2. Determine the underlying policy that candidate is endorsing,
3. Select one portion of this policy to analyze using frameworks discussed in class, and
4. Present this analysis to the class for discussion and critique.

The analysis should follow APA guidelines regarding formatting, references, and written presentation and include areas of analysis as discussed in Blau's text.

### *Political action (20 points total)*

#### Part a: Op-ed (10 points)

In this portion of the assignment, you are to write an opinion editorial about a policy issue of your choice. Please include a name, address and daytime and evening phone numbers so that authorship can be confirmed if your letter is chosen for publication. We edit letters for brevity, grammar and clarity. Op-eds should be type written and submitted with a stamped envelope addressed to Austin American Statesman, Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 670, Austin, Texas 78767. These letters should be submitted to the teaching assistant for mailing on the 10th week of class.

#### Part b: Elevator speech (10 points)

In this assignment, you are to prepare an "elevator speech" that you are prepared to deliver to another, uninformed individual about your policy issue. This elevator speech should be clear about the specific policy that you are discussing, present different perspectives on the issue, and encourages the listener to strongly consider the importance of your opinion, if not vote in your favor. **Sign up sheet will be handed out.**

### *Grades*

Grades will be determined as follows:

92-100 A  
83-91 B  
74-82 C  
65-73 D  
64 and below F

### *Course Evaluation*

At mid-term students will have the opportunity to anonymously evaluate the course and the instructor. Feedback from this evaluation will be used, to the extent possible, to strengthen the remainder of the course. At the end of the term students will have the opportunity to evaluate the course and the instructor using the official Course Instructor Survey of the School of Social Work at the UT-Austin. Of course, constructive feedback on the class is welcome throughout the duration of the term.

### **CLASSROOM POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

1. As students enter the UT School of Social Work, they are simultaneously entering into a profession that puts forth a set of ethical responsibilities and values that all social workers must follow. As such, students are held to the NASW ethical mandates and Standards for Social Work Education as outlined in the Student Handbook
2. Grades are assigned based on the following criteria: The grade of "A" is given for outstanding work that engages course materials with original thought and creativity or a mastery of technical skills. The grade of "B" is given for doing all of the work well. The grade of "C" is given for meeting all course requirements. To obtain a high grade, students must find the time to complete assignments in a way that **integrates and extends** readings, lectures, classroom discussions, and your own critical perspective on the topic.
3. Students are expected to share perspectives and opinions as part of skill development for social work practitioners. Students are expected to behave respectfully toward others who may (and most likely will) view similar situations from a different vantage point. These differences in perspectives do not make one right and the other wrong. Students are expected to critically examine all perspectives and before determining which best fits the situations discussed in class.
4. Phone calls, pagers, and other communication devices are restricted from being on or placed in 'silent' mode while in class. 'Ear buds' are also not allowed.
5. Assignments are to be handed in within the first fifteen minutes of class and on the due date. Late assignments are accepted at the discretion of the professor.
6. The professor is available to students during office hours. Emails and telephone calls will only be returned at that time as well.

7. Disrespect toward the professor or other students is not tolerated and will be handled directly and in the context in which it occurs. Disrespectful behavior includes overt acts, such as talking over others or making derogatory comments based on another person's race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religious preference, and/or ability/disability. Moreover, covert acts of disrespect, such as sneers and other derogatory facial expressions, excluding class members from classroom tasks, etc. are also unacceptable.
8. Students are permitted **one** excused absence. A student is considered absent if they arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, leave early, or are unable to come to class. Any other absences will result in a reduction by one letter grade.
9. Students have the opportunity to evaluate the professor and are expected to critique the course in time for the professor to make changes that will benefit them. If students think the professor has failed to live up to the principles or philosophies listed, they are expected to communicate their concerns directly to the professor and in a constructive manner.

### **Selected Web Sites on Poverty, Antipoverty Policy, and Welfare Reform**

Institute for Research on Poverty ([www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/](http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/))

See their own publications as well as their links to other poverty-related sources. The IRP also publishes FOCUS, an excellent welfare and policy related journal.

Joint Center for Poverty Research ([www.jcpr.org/](http://www.jcpr.org/))

The Urban Institute ([www.urban.org/index.htm](http://www.urban.org/index.htm))

Center for Research on Child Well-being ([www.wws.princeton.edu:80/~crcw](http://www.wws.princeton.edu:80/~crcw))

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation ([www.mdrc.org](http://www.mdrc.org))

The MDRC is a non-profit, nonpartisan social policy research organization. The MDRC leads the field in evaluations of welfare-to-work programs.

The Brookings Institution ([www.brook.edu/](http://www.brook.edu/))

National Center for Children in Poverty (<http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/>)

Mathematica Policy Research ([www.mathematica-mpr.com/](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/))

*The following is a list of advocacy research organizations that provide useful information:*

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities ([www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org))

Center for Law and Social Policy ([www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org))

Children's Defense Fund ([www.childrensdefense.org/](http://www.childrensdefense.org/))

The Electronic Policy Network ([www.epn.org](http://www.epn.org))

The EPN has extensive links to other liberal research centers and The American Prospect, a bi-monthly journal.

Welfare Information Network ([www.welfareinfo.org](http://www.welfareinfo.org))

*Government sites of interest:*

U.S. Census Bureau ([www.census.gov/](http://www.census.gov/))

Congressional Budget Office ([www.cbo.gov](http://www.cbo.gov))

Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov))