

**SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY**

Social Work 382R  
Spring, 2007  
Unique #: 64020

Wednesdays 2:30-5:20  
Room: 2.118

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**Course Description**

This course critically examines, from both historical and current perspectives, the overall structure of the American social welfare system with a focus on the disproportionate social, economic, and political problems of vulnerable populations. The course also considers the parallel historical development of the profession of social work, including the ways in which it responded to social problems across key periods of social welfare policy development (for example, the New Deal, the War on Poverty, urban renewal, the contemporary period of welfare reform).

**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**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the dominant historical themes that have shaped social welfare policy in the United States;
2. Understand the economic and political constraints and opportunities in the development of social welfare problems and policies;
3. Understand the

- relationship between the history of the social work profession and the development of social welfare policy;
4. Apply social work values to critically analyze problems;
  5. Gain knowledge and skills as a background for analyzing major policies that form the foundation of social welfare and analyze organizational, local, state, national and international issues in social welfare policy and social service delivery;
  6. Understand social welfare policy arenas impacting service delivery, social work practice, and attainment of individual and social well-being;
  7. Understand how social policies differentially affect diverse populations in American society;
  8. Gain knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of social workers in the policy process, including advocacy, research, and community organizing, with the goal of promoting and advocating for social and economic justice through [both] organizational and social change.

### **Overview of the Course**

The semester begins with a brief review of the evolution of social welfare policy in the U.S. Frameworks for understanding the origins of the modern welfare state are then developed. In particular, these frameworks seek to explain the patchwork of services that form the foundation of, as the title of a popular textbook describes, the “reluctant” U.S. welfare state. The course proceeds to examine trends in poverty, inequality, and social welfare across major historical eras, culminating in an examination of contemporary problems and policies. Since the course is taking place while U.S. troops are engaged in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Texas legislature is in session, the impact of U.S. foreign policy and electoral politics will be interwoven throughout the course. Because the past is prologue to the devolution that is currently taking place in the structure of relief and social welfare, by connecting historical efforts with contemporary policy responses we will be better equipped to understand and evaluate current social problems and attempts to address them via policy.

### **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, films, guest presentations, weekly readings, framed-discussions, group exercises, and student briefings.

### **Required Readings**

This course does not use a textbook, per se, but does make extensive use of the third edition of the book titled *Controversial Issues in Social Policy*. For that reason, the book has been ordered from the co-op and listed as a “required” reading. The majority of course readings are drawn from an extensive assortment of articles, book chapters,

essays, and electronic media sources.

The packet of required readings is available at University Duplicating Service (471-1615). Please call ahead to make sure copies of the reading packet are available.

### **Course Requirements**

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

- |    |                     |       |
|----|---------------------|-------|
| A) | Class Participation | (10%) |
| B) | Quizzes             | (25%) |
| C) | Book Review         | (20%) |
| D) | Food Stamps Report  | (25%) |
| E) | Opinion Editorial   | (20%) |

#### **⊗ Class Participation**

Students will be graded on the quality of their contribution to the collective learning pursuits of the class, including participation in class and group e-mail discussions and/or office visits with the instructor. Since attendance is a key condition of participation, more than two absences will result in a letter grade at *least* one grade below an “A”. Each subsequent absence will reduce the overall participation grade by one letter grade. At the end of the semester students will provide a self-assessment of their participation to the instructor that will be used to inform the final participation grade.

#### **⊗ Quizzes**

Students will be given five (5) quizzes throughout the semester. The quizzes will ask basic questions about class lectures and readings, so students should be thoroughly familiar with the readings through that week and lecture material previously discussed in class. Students will be allowed to drop the lowest grade they receive for a total of four quiz scores. Because of this drop policy, **no** make-up quizzes will be given. Quizzes will be given on the following dates: **February 7 & 21, March 7 & 28, and April 18.**

#### **⊕ Book Review**

Students must review one book from the following list. Reviews should be 5-7 pages, 12-point font and 1.5 spaced. The grade for the reviews will be based on how clearly you demonstrate your understanding of the book, the depth and vigor of the analysis, and how you respond to the following:

- a) What main points are presented?
- b) How effectively and in what ways does the book cover the subject of social policy, poverty, and politics? What are the primary strengths and weaknesses?
- c) How well and in what ways does the book relate to course readings and information that has been discussed in class? Use at least 2-3 examples and provide as much detail as possible.

- d) What audience would benefit most from reading the book? Explain your reasoning.

Because this is a short paper, you will need to be concise, making your points clearly and succinctly. Please note that your critical point of view is more important than merely summarizing the main issues and activities of the book or the prisoner review. To assist with this assignment, a primer on key elements of a good book review will be given out in class.

**Assignment Due Date:** The papers are due on **Wednesday, February 28.**

**Note:** Except in the case of emergencies, and then only with the permission of the professor, **late writing assignments will not be accepted without penalty.** Students are expected to turn in all required assignments on the agreed upon due date **at the beginning of class.** Assignments turned in after class starts will be considered late. Late assignments will be assessed point penalties at the rate of four (4) points each day late. If there is an unavoidable and compelling problem, then the student should see the professor and negotiate another due date in advance.

**Books:**

- 1) One Nation. Underprivileged: Why American Poverty Affects Us All by Mark Rank
- 2) In Our Hands: A Plan to Replace the Welfare State by Charles Murray
- 3) The Motherhood Manifesto: What America's Moms Want – and What To Do About It by Joan Blades & Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner

⊗ **Food Stamps Report**

It is important for social work students to have personal experience with issues that affect low-income clients. You may elect to fulfill one of the following two options:

*Option 1* – submit a 5-7 page report on what it was like to live within the budget and rules of the food stamp program for two weeks; or

*Option 2* – submit a 5-7 page report that provides a detailed accounting of your food purchases/expenses for two weeks. The report should examine and compare these purchases in light of food stamp budget allowances and regulations. Both options are intended to familiarize students with the food stamp program, and to demonstrate your knowledge of program strengths and weaknesses. The reports may be submitted anytime during weeks 5-12 (**February 15-April 5**). Whatever option you choose to pursue, the paper should include the following:

- 1) Be clear about which option you have chosen (and why);
- 2) Demonstrate an awareness of the rules that apply to the food stamps program;
- 3) Provide information about what it takes to apply for and receive food stamps;
- 4) Describe an appropriate food stamps budget for your household, and defend the appropriateness of the level you have chosen;
- 5) Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the program (conceptually and based on your experience) and recommendations to improve the program based on your analysis;
- 6) Clearly and accurately document your purchases during the two-week period;
- 7) Summarize your experience (Was it valuable? What was learned? Etc.)

⊗ **Op-Ed/Briefing**

Students must team up with a classmate to develop an Opinion Editorial related to problems, issues, programs, policies and other material covered in class. Students who successfully publish an op-ed in any one of Texas’ ten largest daily newspapers will receive an automatic 100% for the assignment. [Otherwise, Op-Eds will be graded by the instructor] All students will be required to succinctly summarize their Op-Eds in informal briefings to be conducted in class during the final two weeks of the course. Students are encouraged to focus on topics being discussed in the Texas legislature, but all subjects selected for this assignment must be pre-approved by the instructor. **More information about this assignment will be given during the third week of class.**

**Grades**

Grades will be determined as follows:

100 - 94 =	A	93 - 90 =	A-		
89 - 87 =	B+	86 - 84 =	B	83 - 80 =	B-
79 - 77 =	C+	76 - 74 =	C	73 - 70 =	C-

**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.

**Course Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Text/Readings</b>
Week 1 1/17	Introduction and overview of the course Rules for being a conscious social worker Video: Influencing State Policy	<i>No readings</i>

Week 2 1/24	Theories of the welfare state The Children's Bureau Highlights of social work history	<b>Katz</b> , "Introduction" <b>Lathrop</b> , "Child welfare" <b>Klosterman</b> , "Speaking truth..."
Week 3 1/31	What caused the Great Depression? Video: The Great Depression The Social Security Act	<b>McElvaine</b> , "Reactions to Hoover" <b>Black</b> , "Coming into her own" <b>Caro</b> , "The New Deal"
Week 4 2/7	The War on Poverty and the Great Society Social Movements in the 60's  * note: class will visit the LBJ library  <b>Quiz #1</b>	<b>Coontz</b> , "American families in the 1950s" <b>Kiester</b> , "The GI Bill..." <b>Moynihan</b> , "Tangle of pathology" <b>Chandler</b> , "Curiously uninvolved"
Week 5 2/14	The color of social policy Demographic trends in Texas Texas Poverty	<b>Sherman</b> , "African American and Latino Families" <b>Garrett</b> , "Living in America" <b>Mills</b> , "A tale of two hurricanes" <b>Karger et al</b> – Debate #2 & #8
Week 6 2/21	Poverty and inequality in America Myths and realities of poverty Is inequality immoral? Class exercise  <b>Quiz #2</b>	<b>Christopher</b> , "Poverty line 40 years later" <b>Boushey</b> , "No way out" <b>Freeman</b> , "Solving the new inequality" <b>Karger et al</b> – Debate #1
Week 7 2/28	Poverty cont'd Welfare reform Video: Legacy  <b>*Book Review Due*</b>	<b>Dodson</b> , "When there is no time or money" <b>Lichtenwalter</b> , "Examining transportation" <b>Braman</b> , "From one generation to the next" <b>Karger et al</b> – Debate #6 & #14
Week 8 3/7	Video: cont'd Myths and realities of welfare	<b>Edin et al</b> , "A peek inside the black box"

	What's right with welfare?  <b>Quiz #3</b>	<b>Schneider</b> , " <i>Social capital</i> " <b>Kissane</b> , " <i>Responsible but uninformed?</i> " <b>Karger et al</b> – Debate #12
Week 9 3/14	<b>No class – Spring Break</b>	
Week 10 3/21	Corporate welfare Corporations gonna get your mama What's an economy for? Guest lecturer: Prof. Bob Jensen	<b>Boyer</b> , " <i>How corporations came to have...</i> " <b>Prins</b> , " <i>Introduction</i> " <b>Palaima</b> , " <i>Greed is blowing the pay gap</i> " <b>Brouwer</b> , " <i>Buying the temple</i> "
Week 11 3/28	Talkin' about taxes We're all on welfare now Conservative & electoral politics  <b>Quiz #4</b>	<b>Singer</b> , " <i>What should a billionaire give?</i> " <b>Mendenhall</b> , " <i>A guide to the EITC</i> " <b>Watts</b> , <i>Bush signs \$70 billion</i> " <b>Wolcott</b> , " <i>Red state Babylon</i> " <b>Wilentz</b> , " <i>Worst president in history?</i> " <b>Cannato</b> , " <i>Bush has time</i> "
Week 12 4/4	The demographics of aging Social Security: America's #1 anti-poverty tool Guest lecturer: <b>TBA</b>  <b>* Food Stamps report due*</b>	<b>Himes</b> , " <i>Elderly Americans</i> " <b>Baker</b> , " <i>Glories of privatization</i> " <b>Marmor</b> , " <i>Understanding social insurance</i> " <b>Karger et al</b> – Debate #3
Week 13 4/11	International perspectives Family values vs. valuing families Free trade vs. Fair trade Presentation: Comparative policy outcomes	<b>Kaiser</b> , " <i>In Finland's footsteps</i> " <b>Heymann</b> , " <i>Work, family, and equity index</i> " <b>Grant</b> , " <i>Expecting better</i> " <b>Heymann</b> , " <i>Can working families ever win?</i> "
Week 14 4/18	Towards the common good Frameworks for evaluating good social	<b>Boyer</b> , " <i>From a corporate world...</i> "

	policy Class exercises  <b>Quiz #5</b>	<b>Wright</b> , “ <i>Two redistributive proposals</i> ” <b>Maynard</b> , “ <i>Evidence-based decision-making</i> ”
Week 15 4/25	Student op-ed briefings  <b>*Op-ed due*</b>	No readings assigned
Week 16 5/2	Student op-ed briefings Last regular class	No readings assigned
Final exam, if needed	Student Policy Briefings	

### Full citations for course packet

#### Week 1

No readings assigned

#### Week 2

Katz, W. L. (2001). Introduction. In W. L. Katz & L. R. Lehman (Eds.), *The Cruel Years: American Voices at the Dawn of the 20th Century* (pp. xii-xliv). New York: Apex Publishing.

Lathrop, J. (1919). Child welfare standards: A test of democracy. In S. Myers-Lipton (Ed.), *Social Solutions to Poverty: America's Struggle to Build a Just Society* (pp. 130-135). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Klosterman, E., & Stratton, D. (2006). Speaking truth to power: Jane Addams' values base for peacemaking. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 21(2), 158-168.

#### Week 3

McElvaine, R. S. (1983). Reactions to Hoover and Economic Breakdown. In R. McElvaine (Ed.), in *Down and Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the Forgotten Man* (pp. Chapter 1). Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press.

Black, A. (1996). Coming Into Her Own: ER as First Lady, in *Casting Her Own Shadow: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Shaping of Postwar Liberalism* (Chapter 2). New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press.

Caro, R. (1982). The New Deal, in *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power* (Chapter 14). New York, N.Y.: Alfred Knopf.

#### **Week 4**

Coontz, S. (1992). "Leave It to Beaver" and "Ozzie and Harriet": American families in the 1950s, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (Chapter 2). New York: Basic Books.

Kiester, E. (1994). The G.I. Bill may be the best deal ever made by Uncle Sam. *Smithsonian*, 25(8), 128-137.

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>

Chandler, S. (2004). "Curiously uninvolved": Social work and protest against the War in Vietnam. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 31(4), 3-20.

#### **Week 5**

Sherman, A. (2006). *African American and Latino Families Face High Rates of Hardship*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [2006, November 21].

Garrett, K. (2006). *Living in America: Challenges Facing New Immigrants and Refugees*. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation [2006, August].

Mills, N. (2006, Summer). A Tale of Two Hurricanes: Galveston and New Orleans. *Dissent*.

Karger et al: Debate #2 & #8

#### **Week 6**

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

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

Freeman, R. B. (1999). *Solving the New Inequality*, in *New Inequality: Creating Solutions for Poor America*. (Chapter 1). Boston: Beacon Press.

Karger et al: Debate #1

#### **Week 7**

Dodson, L. B., E. (2005). When there is no time or money: Work, family, and community lives of low-income families. In J. B. Heymann, C. (Ed.), *Unfinished Work: Building Equality and Democracy in an Era of Working Families*. New York: The New Press.

Lichtenwaller, 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.

Braman, D. W., J. (2003). From one generation to the next: How criminal sanctions are reshaping family life in urban America. In J. W. Travis, M. (Ed.), *Prisoners Once Removed: The Impact of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families, and Communities*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.

Karger et al: Debate #6 & #14

### **Week 8**

Edin, K., Kefalas, M., & Reed, J. (2004). A peek inside the black box: What marriage means for poor unmarried parents. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 66(November), 1007-1014.

Schneider, J. (2006). *Social Capital and Welfare Reform: Organizations, Congregations, and Communities*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kissane, R. (2006). Responsible but uninformed? Nonprofit executive and program directors' knowledge of welfare reform. *Social Service Review* (June), 322-345.

Karger et al: Debate #12

### **Week 9**

Spring break – no readings assigned

### **Week 10**

Boyer, W. H. (2003). How Corporations Came to Have So Much Power, in *Myth America: Democracy vs. Capitalism* (Chapter 2). New York: The Apex Press.

Prins, N. (2004). Introduction, in *Other People's Money: The Corporate Mugging of America*. New York: The New Press.

Palaima, T. (2006, September 12). Greed is blowing the pay gap out of proportion. *Austin-American Statesman*.

Brouwer, S. (2004). Buying the Temple and Throwing Away the Key, in *Robbing Us Blind: The Return of the Bush Gang and the Mugging of America* (Chapter 20). Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.

### **Week 11**

Singer, P. (2006, December 17). What should a billionaire give - and what should you? *New York Times*.

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.

Watts, W. (2006). *Bush signs \$70 billion tax-cut extension*. MarketWatch. Available: [www.marketwatch.com](http://www.marketwatch.com) [2006, May 17].

Wolcott, J. (2006, November). Red State Babylon. *Vanity Fair*.

Wilentz, S. (2006, May). The Worst President in History? *Rolling Stone*.

Cannato, V. (2006, December 5). Bush has time - and history - on his side. *Austin-American Statesman*, A-17.

## **Week 12**

Himes, C. (2002). *Elderly Americans* (Vol. 56, No. 4): Population Reference Bureau.

Baker, D. W., M. (1999). The Glories of Privatization, in *Social Security: The Phony Crisis* (Ch. 5). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

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

Karger et al: Debate #3

## **Week 13**

Kaiser, R. (2005, August 7). In Finland's Footsteps. *Washington Post*, pp. B-01.

Heymann, J. (2004). *The Work, Family, and Equity Index: Where Does the United States Stand Globally?* Boston: Project on Global Working Families.

Grant, J. (2005). *Expecting Better: A State-by-State Analysis of Parental Leave Programs*. Washington D.C.: National Partnership for Women and Families.

Heymann, J. (2002). Can working families ever win? In J. R. Cohen, J. (Ed.), *Can Working Families Ever Win?* Boston: Beacon Press.

## **Week 14**

Boyer, W. H. (2003). From a Corporate World to a Democratic World, *Myth America: Democracy vs. Capitalism* (pp. Chapter 10). New York: The Apex Press.

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

Maynard, R. (2006). Evidence-Based Decision Making: What Will it Take for the Decision Makers to Care? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 25(2), 249-265.

**Week 15**

No readings Assigned

## **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/](http://www.urban.org/))

Center for Research on Child Well-being (<http://crcw.princeton.edu/>)

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.movingideas.org/](http://www.movingideas.org/))

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

Center for Public Policy Priorities ([www.cppp.org](http://www.cppp.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))