



**COURSE TITLE/SECTION:** SOCW 6351 – Advanced Social Policy Analysis

**TIME/PLACE:** Mondays, 9:00 – 12:00 AM, Room SW107A

**FACULTY:** Dennis Kao, MSW, PhD (SW 402)

**OFFICE HOURS:** Mondays, 12-2, Tuesdays, 10-12 or by appointment

**E-MAIL:** dtkao@uh.edu

**PHONE:** 713-743-6392

---

## **I. Course**

### **A. Description**

Provides knowledge of comparative social welfare systems and policies, the impact of policy on clients and communities, and the skills of policy analysis.

### **B. Purpose**

This course is the required advanced social welfare policy course. The course examines alternative models of policy development and applies them to current issues in social welfare. It emphasizes frameworks for policy research and secondary analysis of governmental data. It provides knowledge of social welfare systems and policies, the impact of policy on clients and communities, and the skills of policy analysis as a means to achieving social and economic justice for oppressed groups. A comparative perspective is included.

## **II. Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to

1. Delineate skills in initiating, formulating, implementing and evaluating social welfare policies and programs;
2. Demonstrate knowledge of cross-cultural comparative perspectives of social welfare systems and several models of social policy and program analysis;
3. Describe how political and legislative processes influence social welfare policy and program development;
4. Discuss how social work professionals can affect the formulation, implementation and modification of social policies and service delivery systems;

5. Demonstrate an understanding of how social welfare policy formulation and program development may exclude oppressed groups from participation, and how full participation can be insured;
6. Demonstrate an understanding of how social welfare policy analysis may be used to advance or hinder the pursuit of social and economic justice;
7. Demonstrate the successful application of secondary data sources in the analysis of social welfare policies and services; and
8. Demonstrate critical thinking skills in assessing social need, developing potential social welfare policies and program options, and evaluating current social welfare policies.

### **III. Course Content**

This course will include the following topical (content) areas:

1. Overview of social policy;
2. Governmental social insurance and income maintenance programs;
3. Fields of policy practice;
4. Alternative welfare programs;
5. The use and application of data sources to analyze policies; and
6. Assessing need, developing policies and program options, and evaluating current policies.

### **IV. Course Structure**

Class formats will vary from session to session, depending on session content. Interactive lectures and discussion will be the primary format; however, in-class exercises, guest speakers, and peer presentations, may play a role in class instruction. Students are expected to complete all readings as assigned, as they are a major source of learning in this course.

*The professor reserves the right to alter readings, course topics, and assignments as needed during the course of the semester to better accommodate learning goals and time constraints.*

### **V. Textbooks**

Readings are required as noted in the syllabus, and as assigned during the course of the semester. Assigned readings will be available on Blackboard or distributed to students by the professor.

Please note that readings have been purposefully selected to strengthen students' critical thinking and encourage healthy classroom debate; it is not expected that students (or the professor) will agree with all perspectives presented.

In order to stay abreast of current issues, students should read at least one daily newspaper, preferably reflecting diverse political viewpoints. The following are suggested: The

Houston Chronicle, The Washington Post, The New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal. International sources, such as BBC News, are also encouraged. Students are encouraged to share articles that complement our class discussions either by bringing them to class or posting them to Blackboard for online discussion.

## VI. Course Requirements

The final grade for this course will be based on the following assignments:

- 1) **Class Participation** **15%**
- 2) **Library exercise** **5%**  
(DUE DATE: Friday, 2/17, at 5:00 pm)
- 3) **Written Assignments (3 total)**
  - Social Problem Identification Paper** **20%**  
(DUE DATE: 2/27)
  - Op-ed Critique** **15%**  
(DUE DATE: 4/2)
  - Comparative Analysis (final)** **25%**  
(DUE DATE: 5/5, by 5:00 p.m.)
- 4) **Policy Practice Project/Presentation** **20%**  
(Brief proposal due 3/5; Presentations on 4/23 and 4/30)
- 5) **Extra Credit TBD**

Details about these assignments are provided at the end of this syllabus. All assignments are due by the dates specified above. **All assignments due on class meeting days are due before the start of the class session that day.** Late submissions will be accepted for all assignments *except* In-Class Writing; however, ***the grade value will be reduced by 10% for each day late***, including turning in an assignment after the time deadline on the day it is due. If the weekly in-class writing assignment is missed due to absence or lateness, it cannot be made up at a later date or time.

## VII. Evaluation and Grading

The following standard grading scale has been adopted for all courses taught in the College:

A =	96-100% of the points	C+ =	76-79.9%
A- =	92-95.9%	C =	72-75.9%
B+ =	88-91.9%	C- =	68-71.9%
B =	84-87.9%	D =	64-67.9%
B- =	80-83.9%	F =	Below 64%

## VIII. Policy on grades of I (Incomplete)

The grade of "I" (Incomplete) is a conditional and temporary grade given when students are either (a) passing a course or (b) still have a reasonable chance of passing in the judgment of the instructor but, for non-academic reasons beyond their control have not completed a relatively small part of all requirements. Students are responsible for informing the instructor immediately of the reasons for not submitting an assignment on time or not taking an examination. Students must contact the instructor of the course in which they receive an "I" grade to make arrangements to complete the course requirements. Students should not re-register for the same course in a following semester in order to complete the incomplete requirements.

The grade of "I" must be changed by fulfillment of course requirements within one year of the date awarded or it will be changed automatically to an "F" (or to a "U" [Unsatisfactory] in S/U graded courses). The instructor may require a time period of less than one year to fulfill course requirements, and the grade may be changed by the instructor at any time to reflect work complete in the course. The grade of "I" may not be changed to a grade of W.

## IX. Policy on academic dishonesty and plagiarism

Students are expected to demonstrate and maintain a professional standard of writing in all courses, do one's own work, give credit for the ideas of others, and provide proper citation of source materials. Any student who plagiarizes any part of a paper or assignment or engages in any form of academic dishonesty will receive an "I" for the class with a recommendation that a grade of F be assigned, subsequent to a College hearing, in accordance with the University policy on academic dishonesty. Other actions may also be recommended and/or taken by the College to suspend or expel a student who engages in academic dishonesty.

All papers and written assignments must be fully and properly referenced using APA style format (or as approved by the instructor), with credit given to the authors whose ideas you have used. If you are using direct quotes from a specific author(s), you must set the quote in quotation marks or use an indented quotation form. For all direct quotes, you must include the page number(s) in your text or references. Any time that you use more than four or five consecutive words taken from another author, you must clearly indicate that this is a direct quotation. Please consult the current APA manual for further information.

Academic dishonesty includes using any other person's work and representing it as your own. This includes (but is not limited to) using graded papers from students who have previously taken this course as the basis for your work. It also includes, but is not limited to submitting the same paper to more than one class. If you have any specific questions about plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please raise these questions in class or make an appointment to see instructor. This statement is consistent with the University Policy on Academic Dishonesty that can be found in your UH Student Handbook.

## X. Course Schedule and Assignments

**Session 1. January 23**

**Course Overview**

**Session 2. January 30**

**What is social policy?  
Defining social problems**

Chambers, D.E. (2000). Analyzing the social problem background of social policies and social programs. In *Social Policy and Programs: A Method for the Practical Public Policy Analyst* (pp. 7-30). New York: Macmillan.

Stone, D. (1997). Symbols. In *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making* (pp. 138-162). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Jordan-Zachery, J.S. (2001). Black womanhood and social welfare policy: The influence of her image on policy making. *Race Relations Abstracts*, 26, 3, 5-24.

**Session 3. February 6**

**How policy is made  
Social Workers in the policy arena**

Jansson, B. (2008). Understanding the ecology of policy in governmental, electoral, community, and agency settings (Chapter 4). In *Becoming an Effective Policy Advocate* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole/Thomson Learning. [Read only pp. 101-125, NOT the entire chapter]

Hinrichsen, G.A. et al. (2010). Influencing public policy to improve the lives of older Americans. *Gerontologist*, 50(6), 735-743.

Schneider, R.L. & Lester, L (2001). Legislative advocacy. In *Social Work Advocacy: A New Framework for Action* (pp. 241-285). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Rose, S. (1999). Social workers as municipal legislators: Potholes, garbage, and social activism, *Journal of Community Practice*, 6(4), 1-15.

And skim the following two resources:

Sullivan, J.V. (2007). *How our laws are made* (100<sup>th</sup> Congress, House of Representatives, Document 110-49). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. [Look at pp. 1-8, 35-36, and 50-52].

Texas Legislative Council (2010). *Guide to Texas legislative information: About the legislative process in Texas*. Accessed at:

<http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/gtli/legproc/process.html>

[Follow links on right-hand side].

#### **Session 4. February 13**

#### **Library Session (with Irene Ke, Social Work Librarian)**

Class will meet at the MD Anderson Library  
Room 10F in the basement

***\*LIBRARY EXERCISE DUE 5:00 PM, FRIDAY, 2/17***

Ke, I. (2005). *Information Resources for SOCW6351 Class*. Accessed at:

<http://guides.lib.uh.edu/socialwelfarepolicyanalysis>

#### **Session 5. February 20**

#### **Frameworks for policy analysis**

Sample policy frameworks, TBD

Moye, J. & Rinker. (2002). It's a hard knock life. *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, 39, 375-394.

#### **Session 6. February 27**

#### **Social welfare in historical perspective**

***\*SOCIAL PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION PAPER DUE***

Stuart, P.H. (1999). Linking clients and policy: Social work's distinctive contribution: *Social Work*, 44, 4, 335-347.

Feingold, K., Wherry, L. & Schaurdin, S. (2004). Block grants: historical overview and lessons learned. *New Federalism: Issues Options for States*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, pp. 1-7.

Reisch, M. (2008). From melting pot to multiculturalism: The impact of racial and ethnic diversity on social work and social justice in the USA. *British Journal of Social Work*, 38, 88-804.

Katz, M.B. (2010). The American welfare state and social contract in hard times. *Journal of Policy History*, 22, 508-529.

## Session 7. March 5

### **Value debates in social welfare policy: Social welfare in social, political, economic, cultural context**

#### ***\*POLICY PRACTICE PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE***

Abramovitz, M. (2001). Everyone is still on welfare: The role of redistribution in social policy. *Social Work*, 46, 4, 297-308.

Besharov, D. (2008). *Social welfare conservatism*. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

\*Read one of the following two sets of articles, based on the group assigned to you by the instructor:

#### 1) *Housing First* articles:

Beyond Shelter (n.d.). Housing First: Ending family homelessness. *Beyond Shelter Initiatives*. Accessed from:  
[http://www.beyondshelter.org/aaa\\_initiatives/ending\\_homelessness.shtml](http://www.beyondshelter.org/aaa_initiatives/ending_homelessness.shtml)

Graves, F. & Sayfan, H. (2007, June 24). First things first: 'Housing First,' a radical new approach to ending chronic homelessness, is gaining ground in Boston. *The Boston Globe*. Accessed from:  
[http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2007/06/24/first\\_things\\_first/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2007/06/24/first_things_first/)

Blankinship, D.G. (2009, Mar. 31). Study: Housing homeless, letting them drink saves \$4M a year. *The Seattle Times*. Accessed from:

[http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2008957119\\_webalcoholics01m.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2008957119_webalcoholics01m.html)

Schram, K. (2002, Oct. 15). 'Dumb', And 'REALLY Dumb'. *KOMO News*. Accessed from:  
<http://www.komonews.com/news/archive/4073056.html>

2) *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) articles:*

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2010). *Policy Basics: Introduction to the Food Stamp Program*. Washington, D.C.: The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Scharrer, G. (2010, Jan. 12). Official: Texas has worst-ranked food stamp program. *Houston Chronicle*. Accessed from:  
<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/6811169.html>

Lebzelter, R. (2008, Oct. 12). Taxpayers pick up tab for junk food. *Star Beacon*. Accessed from:  
<http://starbeacon.com/letters/x343691581/Taxpayers-pick-up-tab-for-junk-food>

Vanderkam, L. (2010, Apr. 19). Do food stamps feed obesity? *USA Today*. Accessed from:  
[http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2010-04-20-column20\\_ST\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2010-04-20-column20_ST_N.htm)

**March 12**

**NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK**

**Session 8. March 19**

**Policy implementation**

McDonnell, L.M. & Elmore, R.F. (1987). Getting the job done: Alternative policy instruments. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 9, 2, 133-152.

Soss, J., Schram, S., Vartanian, T.O., & O'Brien, E. (2001). Setting the terms of relief: Explaining state policy choices in the devolution revolution. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45, 2, 278-295.



Farrell, M., Rich, S., Turner, L., Seith, D., & Bloom, D. (2008). *Welfare time limits: An update on state policies, implementation, and effects on families*. New York: MDRC. [Read the Executive Summary, pp. ES-1 to ES-10]

## Session 9. March 26

### Understanding policy impacts Inclusion and exclusion in policy

Jaffe, P.G., Crooks, C.V., & Wolfe, D.A. (2003). Legal and policy responses to children exposed to domestic violence: The need to evaluate intended and unintended consequences. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 6(3), 205-213.

Soss, J. (1999). Lessons of welfare: policy design, political learning, and political action. *The American Political Science Review*, 93(2), 363-380.

Newhouse, J.P. (2010). Assessing health reform's impact on four key groups of Americans. *Health Affairs*, 29(9), 1714-1724.

Smith, D.B. (2005). Racial and ethnic health disparities and the unfinished civil rights agenda. *Health Affairs*, 24(2), 317-324.

## Session 10. April 2

### Poverty and public assistance policies

#### ***\*OP-ED CRITIQUE DUE***

Center for Public Policy Priorities (2010). *Poverty 101*. Austin, TX: Center for Public Policy Priorities.

Rank, M. & Hirschl, T. (2002). Welfare use as a life course event: Towards a new understanding of the U.S. safety net. *Social Work*, 47(3), 237-248.

Levin-Epstein, J. (2003). *Lifting the lid off the family cap: States revisit problematic policy for welfare mothers* (Childbearing & Reproductive Health Series, Brief No. 1). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

Mitchell, T. (2003). If I survive, it will be despite welfare reform: Reflections of a former welfare student. In V. Adair & S. Dahlberg, *Reclaiming class: Women, poverty, and the promise of Higher Education in America*. (pp. 113-118). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

### **Session 11. April 9**

#### **Social insurance and tax policies**

Simms (2008). Weathering job loss: Unemployment Insurance. Urban Institute, pp. 1-13.

Gonyea, J. & Hooyman (2005). Reducing poverty among older women: Social security reform and gender equity. *Families in Society*, 86(3), 338-346.

Lower-Basch, E. (2008) *Tax credits and public benefits: Complementary approaches to supporting low-income families*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

Torres-Gil, F., Greenstein, R., & Kamin, D. (2005). *Hispanics' large stake in the social security debate*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities,

### **Session 12. April 16**

#### **Health, mental health, and substance abuse policies**

Winakur, J. (2005). What are we going to do with Dad? *Health Affairs*, 24(4), 1064-1072.

Goode, T.D. & Dunne, C. (2003). Rationale for cultural competence in primary care (Policy Brief 1). Washington, DC: National Center for Cultural Competence.

Laffer, A., Arduin, D., & Winegarden, W. (2009, Aug.) *The prognosis of national health insurance: A Texas perspective*. Austin, TX: Texas Public Policy Foundation. [Just read pp. 3-6, 24-25]

Burnam, M.A. et al. (2009). Mental health care for Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. *Health Affairs*, 28(3), 771-782.

**Session 13. April 23**

***POLICY PRACTICE PRESENTATIONS (Part 1)***

**Social welfare policy challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Bennett, L. & Gates, G.J. (2004). *The cost of marriage inequality to gay, lesbian, and bisexual seniors*. Washington, DC: Human Rights Foundation Campaign.

Hudson, R. (2005). The new political environment in aging: Challenges to policy and practice. *Families in Society*, 86(3), 321-327.

Russell, A. (2007). In-state tuition for undocumented immigrants: States' rights and educational opportunity (A Higher Education Policy Brief). Washington, DC: American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Federation for American Immigration Reform (2011). *An immigration reform agenda for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress*. Washington, DC: Federation for American Immigration Reform.

Finn, J.L., Nybell, L.M., & Shook, J.J. (2010). The meaning and making of childhood in the era of globalization: Challenges for social work. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 246-254.

**Session 14. April 30**

***POLICY PRACTICE PRESENTATIONS (Part 2)***  
***Course Wrap-up***

**May 5**

***COMPARATIVE POLICY ANALYSIS DUE***  
***By 5:00 p.m.***

## **XI. Americans with Disabilities Statement:**

Whenever possible, and in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, the University of Houston will attempt to provide reasonable academic accommodations to students who request and require them. Please call 713-743-5400 for more assistance. Instructors may not provide accommodations without supporting documentation from the UH Center for Students with Disabilities.

## **XII. Addenda:**

**Consultation.** Scheduled office hours are indicated on page 1 of this syllabus and are posted outside of my office door (#402). Other times may be arranged by appointment – please contact me by email ([dtkao@uh.edu](mailto:dtkao@uh.edu)) to schedule alternative appointment times. I encourage students to meet with me to discuss assignment topics, questions related to course content, or other topics that arise as a result of course content, assignments, and discussions.

**Course expectations.** Regular, on-time attendance is expected; absences will be reflected in your class participation grade. If you cannot attend class, you are expected to inform me in advance. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact fellow students to obtain missed information.

**Blackboard.** The course information and readings are posted on the Blackboard site for this course. Please use Blackboard for submitting assignments and following course announcements. Students are encouraged to post and discuss links or articles relevant to course content on the discussion board in order to strengthen the course learning environment.

**Electronic Devices.** You are expected to conduct yourself as a professional in this class. Distractions should be kept to a minimum, meaning that cell phones should be turned off before class, and no laptops should be utilized during class sessions, except as otherwise permitted by the professor (e.g. for class presentations).

## Course Assignments

The final grade for this course will be based on the following assignments:

### 1) CLASS PARTICIPATION

#### **Participation and preparedness – 15%**

Active class participation is expected, and is necessary for optimal student learning. We learn from each other; thus, students are expected to come prepared to discuss the weekly readings, as well as broader themes and/or current events that arise around each session's topic. Debate and discussion of different perspectives is expected; however, students are expected to demonstrate respectful conduct towards one another.

Your participation will be assessed using the following criteria:

- supporting flow of discussion (sharing appropriate and relevant content, reading and integrating weekly readings, integrating relevant field experiences, and furthering classroom discussion of session topics);
- active listening; and
- being respectful in comments and action (including regular attendance and arriving on time).

### 2) Library Exercise – 5%

A brief written exercise on conducting library research related to policy will be provided prior to Session 3. Students may complete this assignment during a library session, in conjunction with a librarian, or on their own.

**(DUE: Friday, 2/11, by 5:00 p.m.)**

### 3) WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

#### ***Social problem identification—20% (DUE: 2/27)***

Each student is expected to identify a social issue/problem of interest or concern to him or her. This issue/problem will serve as the basis for additional individual assignments throughout the semester. In approximately 5 double-spaced pages, your paper must:

- a) provide a clear definition of the issue/problem,
- b) discuss the scope and magnitude of the issue/problem,
- c) discuss what causes this issue/problem to exist,
- d) describe how specific individuals, groups, communities, etc. may be affected positively or negatively by this issue/problem,
- e) explain why this issue/problem is of interest to you and worthy of policy attention,
- f) identify a policy addressing this issue/problem that you think you would like to study over the course of the semester.

#### ***Op-ed critique—15% (DUE: 4/2)***

Based on the social issue/problem or policy you have selected, select an op-ed piece in a major

newspaper or magazine that approaches the issue from a perspective that differs from your beliefs or opinions. The op-ed should be attached to the paper you submit. In approximately 3 double-spaced pages, your paper must:

- a) succinctly summarize the author's argument and how the social issue or problem is defined by the author,
- b) discuss the points of disagreement between you and the author,
- c) describe the social, political, economic, cultural values and/or ideology that form the basis for the author's perspectives,
- d) Has this exercise influenced your beliefs and opinions about this issue? How?

***FINAL: Comparative policy analysis—25% (DUE: 5/5 by 5:00 pm)***

If you are studying a state or local policy, identify a policy from a different state or locality which you believe solves the issue/problem in a different manner. If you are studying a national policy, identify a policy to address the same issue/problem from a different country.

- a) Fill out the table provided on Blackboard describing key elements of both policies.
- b) In a 5 pages (double spaced), discuss similarities and differences between the two policies and why you think they exist.
- c) What have you learned through your comparison of the two policies?

**All written assignments will be graded on the following criteria:**

1. Adherence to the required elements of the assignment.
2. Quality of analysis and the depth of understanding of the topic.
3. Logical and well-organized presentation of your arguments, and conclusions that are clearly drawn from your arguments.
4. Appropriate use of references, using sources beyond those provided by the instructor. Be careful about using Internet sources; it is your responsibility to ensure the source you cite is credible.
5. Appropriate grammar and spelling, and evidence that the assignment has been proofread.

In all written assignments, students are expected to follow the guidelines of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the APA Publication Manual. Each assignment is expected to be double-spaced, 12 pt. font, 1" margins. Page numbers must be indicated.

#### **4) GROUP PROJECT**

**Policy Practice (Advocacy) Project and Presentation—20%**  
**(Brief proposal due 3/5; Presentations on 4/23 and 4/30)**

Students may complete this assignment individually or in groups of up to four students. Students will engage in multiple forms of *action* to educate and/or advocate for policy change to promote social justice. The policy practice project may be a new project you or your group creates, or you may join an existing effort in conjunction with a local, state, national, or international organization. These actions may be in the form of phone calls, letter-writing, campaign volunteering, testimony presentation, rally attendance, meeting with a legislator, etc. ***Students***

***must submit a one-page double-spaced proposal describing the intended project prior to beginning the project.***

Presentation dates will be assigned during the second class session:

Students will make 10-15 minute class presentations on the policy advocacy effort at the end of the semester. Presentations should include the following:

- a) a description of the advocacy effort, including its purpose, the activities you engaged in, the target group or audience, and other key participants in the effort,
- b) a discussion of why you chose these specific forms of advocacy,
- c) an analysis of the degree to which you feel your efforts were effective, and why/why not,
- d) how you might have done things differently, and
- e) a discussion of how this experience has impacted your feelings about engaging in policy advocacy.

**5) EXTRA CREDIT—TBD**