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SW 310.01: Social Welfare Policies and Services

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Social work is a profession that requires an understanding of how public policies are made and the ability to influence the political decision-making process. The field has a responsibility to promote social justice and shape public policy by being politically active and by mobilizing disenfranchised populations to influence decisions that impact their lives. This is a challenging prospect given our limited political clout and the power of special interest groups.

In this course we will examine the process by which public policies are formulated and their resulting impact on various segments of American society. We will explore the role of non-governmental agencies, interest and advocacy groups and governmental agencies in resolving social problems. We also will see how different groups and individuals influence the policy-making process, both in terms of the issues that are addressed and the parameters established to deal with such issues. As we shall see, no political process is neutral in its impacts; some groups tend to benefit far more than others regarding how policies are developed and how they are implemented.

To facilitate an understanding of the political process we will review and critically analyze major social policies that impact citizens. Specific domestic policy areas will include welfare reform, child welfare, chemical dependency, and mental health/health care. We will also focus our inquiry on policies crafted to address the needs of such marginalized groups as women and children, Native people, elderly, and mentally ill.

Because a democracy is not a spectator sport and engaged citizens are active participants in their communities, you are expected to actively contribute to building knowledge in this course. While I will share with you my perspectives, knowledge, and experiences in policy-related areas, I expect you to offer your observations and knowledge to the class. Although the classroom will be highly interactive and somewhat “laid back,” it will be academically challenging.

Social Work 310 is the department's designated writing course and you will be expected to present clear, concise, and well-organized written documents that adhere to APA guidelines. You will also be required to critique current programs as they address the needs of marginalized and traditionally oppressed populations while examining strategies to provide effective, culturally sensitive programs. Similarly, you will need to demonstrate an understanding of the values that shape policy and critically analyze how the policies affect citizens marginalized from the political decision-making process.

The class will be conducted as a seminar. Therefore, it is imperative that students come to class prepared to discuss reading assignments. I will provide material as needed, but for the most part the class will be an opportunity for us to reflect upon and analyze questions about social problems and community change through civic participation and policy development. Students will be encouraged to bring their experiences as they relate to topic themes.

**ASSIGNED READINGS & BOOKS**


Readings – Mansfield library’s E-res. System: E-res password is SW310

The Newspaper (could include the Missoulian, Great Falls Tribune, or Billings Gazette; along with such secondary sources as The New York Times or Washington Post)

ASSIGNMENTS

A. Quizzes --There will be a quiz every other Friday beginning September 13. Each quiz will cover designated chapters in the assigned books, library readings, and discussions about APA guidelines. A breakdown of the chapters and quiz dates are outlined below. Make-up quizzes are only allowed if your absence is excused before the date and time of the quiz.

Fast Food Nation  
September 13 – Introduction, Chs 1, 2, 3 & 4; E-res readings 1 & 2;  
September 27 – Chs 5, 6, 7, & 8; E-res readings 3; October 11 - Chs 9, 10, & epilogue;

Question of Intent  
October 25 – Veritas, Part I; E-res reading 4; November 8 – Part II;  
November 22 – Part III; December 6 – Part IV;

B. Papers -- You are required to complete three short papers. The papers should not exceed five pages and must contain a minimum of three sources. Although we will discuss the papers in class, each must include: 1) an overview of a current or proposed social policy (e.g., Gun Control, North American Free Trade Agreement, Welfare Reform, Health Care, etc) in place at the federal, state or local level; 2) the predominant value systems and major factors (i.e., social economic, political) that precipitated its development; 3) the potential impact of the policy on other social policies, social problems, and the public; and 4) proposed or alternative policy options that might combat the problem more effectively.

You must correctly cite your sources (e.g., journal & newspaper readings, Web sites) giving credit to the authors whose work you refer to. Use the APA publication manual on reserve at the library.  
Due Dates – October 4, October 25, November 15

C. Proposal -- Prepare a program proposal that advances a solution to one of the social problems you wrote about in your short papers. Your paper will include: 1) an introduction to the problem; 2) a description of the methods to alleviate the current situation; 3) a set of clearly stated objectives; 4) a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of the program; 5) a plan for future spending; and 6) a budget.  
Paper Length: 7-8 Pages  
Due Date -- December 13

POINTS

| Attendance | 15 |
| Quizzes | 35 |
| Short papers | 150 |
| Final Paper | 100 |
| TOTAL | 300 |

GRADING

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**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1**
Social Policy and its importance to Social Work  
Sept. 4

**Week 2**
History; Frameworks for Policy Analysis; Research Resources  
September 13: Quiz One  
Sept. 9

**Week 3**
How Policy is Made; Speaker - Mike Halligan, Montana Senator and Attorney for the Department of Justice; APA and Writing  
Sept 16

**Week 4**
 Discrimination; Racism; Poverty; and Diversity in America  
September 27: Quiz Two  
Sept. 23

**Week 5**
Policy as Intervention; APA and Writing; Discussion of Papers  
October 4: Paper One Due  
Sept. 30

**Week 6**
Policy Practice on Varying Levels; Speaker  
October 11: Quiz Three  
Oct 7

**Week 7**
Tribal Policy Development; ICWA; APA and Writing  
Oct. 14

**Week 8**
Service Delivery Systems/Choices: The Voluntary Sector and Privatization  
October 24: Quiz Four; Paper Two Due  
Oct. 21

**Week 9**
Child Welfare and Public Assistance Policy  
Oct. 28

**Week 10**
NAFTA and Labor Policy  
November 8: Quiz Five  
Nov. 4

**Week 11**
Substance Abuse; A.P.A and Writing; Discussion of Papers  
November 11: Veterans Day Holiday – No Class  
November 15: Paper Three Due  
Nov. 11

**Week 12**
Grant Writing; Policy Proposals  
November 22: Quiz Six  
Nov. 18

**Week 13**
Housing and Food Policy  
November 27 & 29: Thanksgiving Break – No Class  
Nov. 25

**Week 14**
Social Security, Health Care and Mental Health Policy  
December 6: Quiz 7  
Dec. 2

**Week 15**
American Criminal Justice Policy; Discussion of Papers  
December 13: Paper Four Due  
Dec. 9