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SW 324.01: Gender and the Politics of Welfare

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Social Work 324: Gender and the Politics of Welfare

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Office hrs: Tues and Thurs 2:00-4:00 or by appointment
Class Time: Tuesdays, 6:00-9:00; 3 credits

Course Overview: This class will explore the relationship between gender ideologies and the development of social welfare policies through a variety of methodology that includes reading, discussion, and participation in student-derived learning projects that center around the “marriage solution” inscribed in contemporary welfare reform policies. The course examines historic and contemporary social welfare discourses, polices, programs, and practice in the U.S. through a gender lens. We address critical questions about the impact of social welfare policies and practices on the lives of poor women and men. For example, who sets the terms of the welfare debate? What images of gender have informed the debate? In the disparaging talk of "welfare queens" who and where are the "kings?" Does a focus on the "feminization of poverty" lose sight of the experiences of poor men? How have these images informed the current political moment and the "end to welfare as we know it?" In contemporary U.S. society, women continue to shoulder the majority of the social welfare burden as unpaid and underpaid caregivers. Women make up the majority of both service providers and recipients in state-sponsored social welfare programs. However, the policies and practices of social welfare programs have often served to create divisions among women and between women and men. How have women been divided into "worthy" and "unworthy" welfare recipients? How have women of color been differently defined and treated within the welfare system? How do these images and realities coalesce and collide with those of poor men? How do race and racism play into the images that inform welfare policies and practices? How has the child welfare system been shaped by particular views of gender?

Course Contents: The course critically addresses the "feminization of poverty" and poses a reframing around the gendering of poverty and opportunity. How might we move from a negative image of social welfare to a positive image of social well-being? How will we build a welfare agenda for the 21st century that meaningfully incorporates questions of gender? What are the lessons to be learned from innovative alternatives to welfare's problems at the local, national, and international level? Students will submit commentaries on the course readings, explore resources on the World Wide Web, and read books and articles that offer traditional as well as alternative perspectives on welfare reform debates. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in a learning experience addressing gender and welfare. Specifically we will learn about the marriage (family) formation initiative written into contemporary welfare reform policies in the U.S. The class and its learning activities are structured to demonstrate the connection between practice and policy; service and social change.

Course Texts:

Required Reading:

Mimi Abramovitz, Under Attack, Fighting Back, (New York, Cornerstone Books of Monthly Review Press, 2000).

Randy Albelda & Ann Withorn (Eds.) Lost Ground: Welfare Reform, Poverty, and Beyond. (Boston: South End Press, 2002)

Diane Dujon & Ann Withorn (Eds.) For Crying Out Loud, Women's Poverty in the United States. (Boston: South End Press, 1996)

Faculty Pack of Selected Readings

Optional Reading (on Reserve in Mansfield Library):

Mimi Abramovitz, Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present. (Boston: South End Press, 1988)

Louise Armstrong, Of "Sluts" and "Bastards": A Feminist Decodes the Child Welfare Debate (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1996)

Lawrence Mead, The New Politics of Poverty: The Nonworking Poor in America (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

Quadagno, Jill (1995) The Color of Welfare. New York: Oxford Press.

Course Objectives:

1. Define "gender ideology" and describe at least two perspectives on the relationship between gender and social welfare in the U.S.
2. Discuss the differential treatment among poor women and between women and men in various policies and programs for social support and social control in the U.S.
3. Identify and compare ways in which images regarding gender, age, race, ethnicity, and marital status inform understandings of social welfare problems and solutions.
4. Apply the "family ethic" and "work ethic" concepts to understandings of gender differences in social welfare policy and practice.
5. Describe key terms of current welfare debates and their implications for poor women, men, and children (e.g. "dependency" "hard-to-serve")
6. Demonstrate knowledge of participatory processes of problem solving that involve those affected in assessing and changing welfare policy.
7. Demonstrate knowledge of local and state efforts at building social welfare policy.
8. Participate in a learning project that investigates the marriage formation initiative, its ideological basis, and its implications for funders, service providers, and those living in poverty.
9. Demonstrate competence in using Internet resources for understanding and contributing to the welfare debate, specifically as it concerns the marriage initiative and family formation.
10. Apply a process of policy advocacy and analysis through involvement in the "Speak Now or Forever Hold Your Peace" Projects.

Course Assignments:

Reflections on the Reading (10 points each – 80 points total): Upon completion of the assigned reading, students will submit 8 (2 page maximum) typed reflection essays over the course of the semester. The intent of the reflection essay is to provide students with time to think about and digest the reading; identify themes that connect across the readings; and examine and question taken-for-granted assumptions about gender and other issues that shape the politics of welfare. Students submit responses at the beginning of class and turn in for the week's readings. Last day to hand in a reflection is Dec 3rd.

“Speak Now or Forever Hold Your Peace” Project: (120 points) Beginning with our October 1st class, one hour of class time will be devoted to student-derived projects that address the themes of gender, marriage (family) formation, and welfare reform. Students will complete their projects through engagement in small groups during the next ten weeks of class. We will brainstorm ideas for projects in class. A one-page summary describing the project is due from each group on Oct 29th. Due to the experiential nature of this project, student attendance at small group meetings is important. Students will evaluate themselves and others to assist me in the evaluation process. The Speak Now Project includes the following components:

Portfolio (60 points): Each member of every group will complete a portfolio of her/his work due on Dec. 10th. Group members may choose to work on some of the portfolio items together – e.g., the project summary, the list of group members activities, meeting notes, and the planning process and implementation strategies. The remaining portfolio items must be done individually. The portfolio will consist of the following:

- A summary of the project
- A list of group members’ activities and contacts
- Meeting notes
- Planning process and implementation strategies
- A summary of significant learnings
- Successes, surprises, and challenges

Case Study Presentation (40 points): Students will plan and present a case study of their project on the final evening of class – Dec 17th. Each group will have approximately 30 minutes to present their information. All group members will receive the same grade for this portion of the project.

***Note:** We will meet during finals week for the final class discussion and wrap-up in place of a final exam. We will meet on December 17th from 7:40-9:40 pm.

Determination of Course Grade:

Reflections on the Reading (8 ea.)	80
Speak Now Project	120
Speak Now Portfolio	60
Speak Now Presentation	40
Total:	300

<u>Points</u>	<u>Final Grade</u>
276-300	A
275-251	B
250-226	C
225-195	D
<195	F

Grading Criteria: As does any reader, I have difficulty with written work that is poorly constructed, organized and thought out. The ease with which I can understand your work has a positive effect on your grade. I do not necessarily have to agree with what you say but I do have to understand your work and make sense of it. For all written assignments, I use the following criteria for grading:

- X correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- X indications of thoughtfulness and critical reflection

- X good balance between thoroughness and expressing ideas concisely
- X well organized/clarity of thought (use of headings, subheadings– for larger papers)
- X moves beyond reporting surface content to interpretation, analysis, and original ideas
- X integration of class readings and course learnings; developing themes and connections

Note: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

Course Outline: (Subject to Change)

Sept. 3: Introduction and Overview

Topics: Introductions; course expectations; course overview; overview of contemporary welfare reform policy; The Poverty Budget exercise.

Readings: For Crying Out Loud, Preface (xiii-xvi); Intro (1-17); Walker (23-27); Flanders et al. (29-39); Stevenson & Donovan (67-78); Catanzarite & Ortiz (121-139). Abramovitz, Under Attack, (86-112).

Sept. 10: Mapping the Terrain of Gender and Welfare

Topics: Myths and realities of welfare reform; Speakers: welfare recipients; current tensions and debates.

Readings: FP5, Edelman, “The true purpose of welfare reform;” FP6, MacKinnon, “The welfare reform Washington doesn’t know;” FP16, Mead, “Introduction;” FP25, Greenberg, “Bush’s blunder;” For Crying Out Loud, Albelda & Tilly (79-86); Cerullo & Erlie (87-106); Fong Yee Lee (141-150); Graham (151-153); Withorn (269-285).

Sept. 17: Discourses of Welfare

Topics: The languaging of welfare reform; understandings of gender and power.

Readings: FP11, Young, “Making single motherhood normal;” FP14, Murray, “What government must do;” FP15, Rector, “Using welfare reform to strengthen marriage;” FP20, Lens, “Public voices and public policy: Changing the societal discourse on welfare;” For Crying Out Loud, Fox Piven (183-200); Withorn (201-208); Felder (215-222); Fraser & Gordon (235-268); Abramovitz (287-294); Dujon (307-308).

Sept. 24: Gender, Race, and "Worthiness"

Topics: Who deserves what?; race matters; Speakers – Indian Peoples Action

Readings: Lost Ground, “Who Deserves Help? Who Must Provide?;” “Welfare Reform, Family Hardship, and Women of Color; Welfare Reform and Neighborhoods: Race and Civic Participation;” FP1, “The color of memory;” FP9, “Rights and wrongs of welfare reform;”

Oct. 1: Constructions of Masculinity

Topics: Fatherhood, manhood, power and control; implications for welfare reform; Film: “Tough Guise;” Speak Now Project Meeting #1.

Readings: FP12, Coltrane, “Marketing the marriage “solution;” FP13, Curran & Abrams, “Making men into dads;” FP18, “Seven things states can do to promote responsible fatherhood, FP15, “Using welfare reform to strengthen marriage (review).

Oct. 8: Learning from the Past

Topics: A historical perspective on women, welfare, and poverty; Speak Now Project Meeting #2

Readings: Abramovitz, Under Attack, (51-85); FP1, Cohen & Hanagan, “The politics of gender and the

making of the welfare state, 1900-1940;" [FP3](#), Carlton-LaNey, "Elizabeth Ross Haynes: An African American reformer of womanist consciousness;" [FP4](#), Patriquin, "The historical uniqueness of the Clinton welfare reforms;" Abramovitz, [Lost Ground](#), "Learning from the history of poor and working-class women's activism."

Oct 15: Deja vu?

Topics: Traces of the Past in the Present; Policy "As We Know It." WEEL Speaker – PWORA, TANF and FAIM; TANF - What goals were; How states implemented; implications for immigrants; Speak Now Project Meeting #3.

Readings: Abramovitz, *Under Attack*, (13-50); [FP7](#), Withorn, "No win...Facing the ethical perils of welfare reform;" [FP23](#), Crowell, "Welfare reform: Reforming welfare or reforming families;" [FP24](#), Finn & Underwood, "The state, the clock, and the struggle: An inquiry into the discipline for welfare reform in Montana;" [Lost Ground](#), Mink, "Violating women's rights: Abuses in the welfare policy state."

Oct 22: Success Stories?

Topics: The Politics of Research and Policy Discourse; Western Regional Welfare Made a Difference; Post-Secondary Education and "The Skipping School in Montana Project"; Speaker – Jenny Daniel; Speak Now Project Meeting #4.

Readings: [Lost Ground](#), Schram & Soss, "Success stories: Welfare reform, policy discourse and the politics of research;" *Under Attack*, Kates, (341-348); [FP17](#), "Statement by Wade F. Horn, Ph.D., before the Committee on Finance;" [FP32](#), Butler & Deprez, "Something worth fighting for: Higher education for women on welfare."

Oct 29: Structural Adjustment and Economic Globalization

Topics: Grasping the bigger picture of welfare reform; Defining structural adjustment and economic globalization; Film/speaker to be announced; Speak Now Project Meeting #5

Readings: [FP8](#), Bowen et al. "Poverty and the single mother family: A macroeconomic perspective;" [Lost Ground](#), Fox Piven, "Globalization, American politics, and welfare policy."

Assignment: One page project description due.

Nov 5: Women and Children Last?

Topics: Gender, Child Welfare and Caregiving: Speaker: Kelly Rosenleaf – Child Care Resources; Speak Now Project Meeting #6.

Readings: [Lost Ground](#), White, "Closing the Care Gap that Welfare Reform Left Behind;" Albelda, "Fallacies of welfare to work policies;" [FP10](#), Michel, "Childcare and welfare (in)justice;" [FP21](#), Rain, et al., "Taking responsibility: An insider view of teen motherhood;" [FP31](#), Child Care Action Campaign, "Advocates propose new solutions to help ease national shortage of infant care"

Nov. 12: Welfare and the Politics of Motherhood: Defining Work

Topics: Defining work; What counts as work?; Film: New Voices in Welfare Reform; Speak Now Project Meeting #7.

Readings [FP22](#), Pearlmutter & Bartle, "Supporting the move from welfare to work;" [FP28](#), Kreutziger et al., "A critical look at a contemporary welfare-to-work program in the light of the historic settlement ideal;" Dujon (209-214); Felder (215-220 revisit); Rose (223-234).

Nov. 19: Welfare, Violence, and Social Control

Topics: Exploring gendered contradictions; women, children and violence inside and outside the home; Speaker – Naomi DeMarinos, YWCA Battered Women's Program; Speak Now Project Meeting #8.

Readings: [For Crying Out Loud](#), Roofless Women (41-55); James and Harris (57-65); Cummings and Mandell (163-181).

Nov. 26: Response and Resistance: Women and Men Making Claims

Topics: Women making claims; Poetry Reading – Danielle;; Films: Outriders – Kensington Welfare

Rights Union and/or Fired Up – The National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support; Speak Now Project Meeting #9.

Readings: For Crying Out Loud Vides & Steinitz (295-306) and final Section "And I Still Rise: Visions of a New Movement to Abolish Poverty (309-390); Lost Ground, Baptist & Jenkins, "A view from the "bottom:" Poor people and their allies respond to welfare; FP26, Bhargava, "Why not a war on poverty?" FP27, Finn, "Working for Equality and Economic Liberation;" Abramovitz, Under Attack (113-152).

Dec 3: Possibilities

Topics: Innovative programs, policies and practices; Speakers: The Women of WEEL; Speak Now Project Meeting #10

Readings: FP19, Rector, "The Baucus WORK Act of 2002;" FP29, Prince & Austin, "Innovative programs and practice emerging from the implementation of welfare reform;" FP30, Brooks, "Innovative organizing practice: ACORN's campaign in Los Angeles organizing workfare workers;" FP33, "Max Baucus remarks on Welfare Reform Reauthorization."

Assignment: Speak Now Portfolio due

Dec. 10: Human Rights Day Events (to be announced)

Dec. 17: Speak Now Case Study Presentations: Evaluation and Wrap-Up – 7:40 to 9:40