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SW 310.01: Social Welfare Policies & Services

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Social Work 310
Social Welfare Policies & Services
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Office hours M, W, F (10-12) & as scheduled

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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, gun control, 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, the disabled, 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

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)

Kessler, D. (2001). A Question of Intent: A Great American Battle with a Deadly Industry. New York: Public Affairs.

Schlosser, E. (2001). Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal.
New York: Houghton Mifflin.

ASSIGNMENTS

A. Quizzes --There will be a quiz every other Friday beginning September 21. Each quiz will cover designated chapters in the assigned books and class discussions centered on writing and APA guidelines. A breakdown of the chapters and quiz dates are outlined below.

Fast Food Nation

September 21 – Introduction, Chs 1,2, 3 & 4; **October 5** – Chs 5, 6, 7, & 8; & **October 19** Chs 9, 10, & epilogue

A Question of Intent

November 2 – Veritas, Part I; **November 16** – Part II; **November 30** – Part III;
December 14 – Part IV

B. Papers -- You are required to complete *three* short papers and a program proposal. 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) 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; and 3) proposed policy options that might combat the problem more effectively.

You must correctly cite your sources (e.g., journal & newspaper articles, Web sites) giving credit to the authors whose work you refer to. Use the APA publication manual on reserve at the library and other handouts.

Due Dates – September 24, October 22, & November 26

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. [not to exceed 7 pages]

Due Date -- Wednesday, December 19 by 5:00 p.m.

POINTS

Quizzes	35
Short papers	150
Final Paper	100
TOTAL	285

GRADING

A	285-257
B	256-228
C	227-200
D	199-171
F	170 and below