INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL POLICY

Social Policy 201
Fall 2019
School of Education and Social Policy
Northwestern University

Mondays and Wednesdays
11:00 pm to 12:20 pm
Annenberg Hall, Room 345

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Office: Annenberg Hall, Room 107

Teaching Assistant: Sara Ren (she/they)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course will introduce students to social policy through a broad overview of some of the major social welfare, community development and criminal justice programs in the U.S. coupled with an assessment of the underlying values that contribute to their evolution. A substantial portion of the course will be devoted to policies designed to realize our national aspiration to secure equal opportunity for all Americans as well as to moderate what may be deemed unacceptable inequalities of wealth. Students will explore various policies and programs including (but not limited to): Social Security, welfare, taxation, immigration, early childhood education, public education, criminal justice, as well as health care. Each student will be given the opportunity to delve more deeply into the complexities of a specific policy of his/her choice and will in the process develop skills to analyze and offer recommendations for policy improvement.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Students will be expected to become familiar with the basic purposes and constructs of significant developments in contemporary social policy.

In addition to being held responsible for having thoughtfully completed all assigned readings (in advance of their due dates, a number of shorter individual and group assignments will be given with detailed instructions and deadlines.

Each student is required to write a term paper (10 – 14 pages in length) on a topic of her/his choice. The topic must be proposed no later than October 16th, and the paper is due November 20th.

Students are expected to attend and participate in all class sessions.

There will be two essay exams. A mid-term exam will be taken in class. The final will be a take-home exam.

Mid-term exam (in class): November 4th

Final exam (take home/distributed at the end of the last class): December 9th (due by 5:00pm)
CLASS PARTICIPATION:

Participation will be judged based on your overall engagement in the discussions and group activities. **Students are expected to come to class prepared by reading and reflecting on the assigned materials in advance.** I encourage you to volunteer your thoughts and to interact both with me, our teaching assistant, Sara Renn, and with your classmates. Because social policy decisions in American life are always the result of collective thinking as well as give and take, we will endeavor, in some small way, to reflect that process in our class. In assessing the group assignments, we will consider your level of engagement and creativity to be as important as the substance of your ideas.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic guide". All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit: [http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html)

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY:

It should be understood that anyone directly associated with this class, whether faculty, teaching assistants, students or guests will abide by the University’s Nondiscrimination Policy. Details regarding this policy can be found at: [http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/equopp-access/equal-employment-opportunity/nondiscrimination.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/equopp-access/equal-employment-opportunity/nondiscrimination.html)

COURSE GRADING:

Note: Assuming that a student fully participates in all aspects of this course, the student’s final grade will generally be reflective of his/her best efforts, rather than premised on an uncompromising, mathematical formula. In this spirit, the following depiction of class activities can be relied upon only as a rough estimate of how final grades will be determined.

Class participation, group assignments, and class presentations 20%
- Short assignments 15%
- Term Paper 30%
- Mid-term exam 15%
- Final exam 20%

ACCESSIBLE NU:

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

STUDENT SUPPORT:

Students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being at the NUhelp website and app.
REQUIRED READINGS

1. Books:


2. Articles, Excerpts, Pamphlets, etc:


Science, Policy, And The Young Developing Child: Closing The Gap Between What We Know And What We Do, Jack P. Shonkoff, MD, The Ounce of Prevention Fund, 2004.

The Case for Reparations, Ta-Nehisi Coates, The Atlantic, June 2014, pp.54 - 71


The Metropolis Plan: Choices For The Chicago Region, Chicago Metropolis 2020
http://metropolisplan.org/main.htm


The Value and Role of Communities in Caring for Foster Children. Jerome Stermer in 40 Years of Stewardship…Where are We Headed? A report on the 40th Anniversary Symposium of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, December 2004.
Sept 25  
**Class 1**  
**Introduction**  
Course overview, Goals, and Expectations  
- Stiglitz, *Inequality Is Not Inevitable*  
**Brainstorming Assignment due next class**

Sept 30  
**Class 2**  
**Low Income Work**  
Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed* (Introduction, Chapter One, Evaluation, & Afterward)  
Irwin, *Growth Has Been Good For Decades. So Why Hasn’t Poverty Declined?*  
Putnam, *Crumbling American Dreams*  
Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class’ small group discussion:  
- What is “The American Dream?” Thinking about the workers in Ehrenreich’s book, how capable are they of realizing it?  
- How would you characterize the workers who inhabit Ehrenreich’s book?  
- What are the range of problems that confront these workers? Are they merely personal or suitable objects of social policy?  
**Brainstorming Assignment due today**  
**Social Policy Proposal Group Assignment due October 28th**  
**Term Paper Assignment: Topic due October 16th – Paper due November 20th**

Oct 2  
**Class 3**  
**The Purposes of Government & The Function of Social Policy**  
Page & Simmons, chapters 1-3  
Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class’ small group discussion:  
- What is the meaning of equal opportunity?  
- What are the obstacles to achieving genuine equal opportunity?  
**Newspaper Assignment due next class**

Oct 7  
**Class 4**  
**Social Policy, Perspective and The Art of “Framing” Messages**  
Reich, *The Lost Art of Democratic Narrative*  
Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class’ small group discussion:  
- At the risk of creating stereotypes, but as a means of remaining alert to the potential for ideological conflict, think about the distinguishing features of liberal and conservative political orientations respectively.
### Newspaper Assignment due today

**Oct 14**
Class 5  
*Social Insurance*
Page & Simmons, chapter 4  
Marmor et al, “*Social Insurance,*” chapters 3 (pp. 34 – 42), 4 (pp. 47 – 59), 6, 8, 9, 10 & 12 (pp. 216 – 227)

Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class’ small group discussion:
- What is meant by social insurance?
- What can we own that is germane to our economic security?

### Health Care Group Assignment – due October 21th

**Term paper topic due next class**

**Oct 16**
Class 6  
*Health Care Policy….Part I*
Page & Simmons, chapter 8 pp. 269 - 273  
Marmor et al, *Social Insurance,* chapters 7 & 12 (pp. 227 – 238)

Question to ponder in preparation for this class’ discussion:
How, if at all, does our prior discussion of social insurance pertain to the debate over health care reform that continues to dominate national policy concerns?

**Term paper topic due today**

**Oct 20**
*Health Care Group Assignment due today*

**Oct 21**
Class 7  
*Health Care Policy….Part II: Health Care Group Presentations*

**Social Policy Proposal Group Presentations due next week**

**Oct 23**
Class 8  
*Federal Poverty Level*
*The Mismeasure of Poverty*
Marmor et al, *Social Insurance,* chapter 5 (pp. 74 – 76)

Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class:
- Why is it important to measure the rate of poverty?
- What are the factors that complicate making an objective and reliable determination of the poverty level?

**Social Policy Proposal Group Presentations due next class**

**Oct 28**
Class 9
Social Policy Proposal Group Presentations I

Oct 30 Class 10
Social Policy Proposal Group Presentations II

Nov 4 Mid Term Exam

Nov 6 Class 11
Early Care and Education, Home Visiting and Child Care
Boo, Swamp Nurse
Shonkoff, Science, Policy, and the Young Developing Child: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do.

Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class:

● Imagine that you have just become a parent…. at your child’s birth, the two of you are left alone. How would you be able to manage the responsibilities of child rearing?
● What resources do you envision you would need to support your parenting capabilities? What do you want to know? How will you get that information?
● Where will you find the support that you need?

Education Assignment – due next class

Nov 11 Class 12
Public Education: Can We Really Help Every Student Succeed?
Rothstein, Class and Schools
Page & Simmons, chapter 6

Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class’ small group discussion:

● What motivated the American people to make the education of children and youth mandatory and a public financing obligation?
● What responsibilities have we assigned to our public schools?

Education Assignment due today
Welfare Assignment – due next class
Term paper- due next week

Nov 13 Class 13
The Welfare “Safety Net”
Page & Simmons, chapter 8 pp. 247 – 259 & 274 - 287
Edin & Shafer, $2.00 a Day, chapters 1, 2, 4, & conclusion

Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class’ small group discussion:
Imagine that you are called upon to design (in broad strokes) a welfare system that fulfills our nation’s obligations to the very poor while remaining consistent with our fundamental values. As a preliminary step to addressing this challenge, provide answers to the following questions, in each instance justifying your responses:
What if anything, is the moral and/or prudential basis upon which you construct your welfare system?
Who would you target to receive support? Who would you exclude?
In what form would you make assistance available (e.g., cash, concrete support such as housing, food)?
Where would you vest responsibility to finance and administer this initiative (e.g., local, state or federal governments, the private sector)?
On what basis would you establish parameters for the magnitude of support that should be made available?

Welfare Assignment due today

Nov 18  
Class 14  
Taxation  
Page & Simmons, chapter 5  
ITEP Guide  
Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class:
- What are the purposes that are served by taxation?
- What standards of fairness should we apply to our system of taxation?

Term paper - due next class

Nov 20  
Class 15  
Mass Incarceration as Social Policy  
*Alexander, The New Jim Crow*, Introduction, Chapters. 1 — 4  
Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class:
Envision this setting: an individual is in the process of what is arguably the commission of a crime.
- Who are the institutional agents of the criminal justice system that may be called upon to act to render justice?
- What are their responsibilities?

Term paper due today  
Child Welfare Assignment - due next class

Nov 25  
Class 16  
Child Welfare  
*Bergner, Her Most Difficult Call*  
*Stermer, The Value and Role of Communities in Caring for Foster Children*  
Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class’ small group discussion:
- If you were the social worker assigned to Maria and her sons’ case, would you recommend that the Court terminate parental rights? Be prepared to justify your conclusion by articulating an intelligible standard of parenting.
- What in this instance do you find to be the best interests of the child? Is it the same for each of the children? And what of the family?
To what extent, if any, should the Court give credence to each child’s expression of preference?

**Child Welfare Assignment due today**

Nov 27  
Class 17 (not sure if the majority of students can make it)  
Regional Development  
*The Metropolis Plan 2020*  
Page & Simmons, chapter 8 pp. 259 – 269  
Coates, *The Case for Reparations*

Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class:  
● Think about the community/neighborhood in which you grew up. In retrospect, what do you find appealing about it? And what is problematic?  
● In what ways, if any, might governmental actions (i.e., public policies) have produced the attributes you have identified?

**Immigration Group Assignment due next week**

Dec 2  
Class 18  
Immigration  
*A Candidate’s Guide to Immigration*  
DeParle, *Global Migration: A World Ever More on the Move*  
Question(s) to ponder in preparation for this class:  
● What should be the key elements of a fair and reasonable U.S. immigration policy?

Dec 4  
Class 19  
Immigration Group Reports

**Immigration Group Assignment due today**  
Take-home final exam distributed

Dec 9  
Take-Home, Final Exam due by 5:00 pm
RECOMMENDED READINGS


Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration, 2003 Douglas S. Massey et al, New York, Russell Sage Foundation


Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America, 1996, Silvia Pedraza and Ruben G. Rumbaut, Wadsworth Publishing Company

Racial Critiques of Mass Incarceration: Beyond the New Jim Crow, James Forman Jr, Yale Law School Legal Scholarship Repository, 2/26/12


Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America’s Public Schools, 2013, Diane Ravitch, New York, Alfred A. Knopf


The Case for Reparations, Ta-Nehisi Coates, The Atlantic, June 2014, pp. 54 – 71


The Marriage Cure: Is wedlock really a way out of poverty? The New Yorker, August 18, 2003. Found on the website of the New America Foundation listed under the writings of senior fellow, Katherine Boo.


USEFUL WEB SITES

Annie E. Casey Foundation – Kids Count…. http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT
Brookings Institution…. http://www.brookings.edu
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities…. http://www.cbpp.org
Center on Law and Social Policy…. http://www.clasp.org
Center for the Study of Social Policy…. http://www.cssp.org
Century Foundation…. http://tcf.org
Child Trends…. http://www.childtrends.org
Children’s Defense Fund…. http://www.childrensdefense.org
Demos…. http://www.demos.org
Economic Policy Institute…. http://www.epi.org
Families USA…. http://www.familiesusa.org
Future of Children (Packard Foundation)…. http://futureofchildren.org
Heritage Foundation…. http://www.heritage.org
Institute for Policy Research (Northwestern University)…. http://www.ipr.northwestern.edu
Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy…. http://www.itepnet.org
Joint Center on Poverty Research…. http://www.jcpr.org
Juvenile Justice Initiative…. http://jjustice.org
Metropolis Strategies…. http://www.metropolisstrategies.org
National Conference of State Legislatures…. http://www.ncsl.org
National Governor’s Association…. http://www.nga.org
National Institute for Early Education Research (Rutgers)…. http://nieer.org
Promising Practices Network (Rand Corporation)…. http://www.promisingpractices.net
Urban Institute…. http://www.urban.org
Voices for America’s Children…. http://www.voices.org
Voices for Illinois Children…. http://www.voices4kids.org