I. COURSE RATIONALE

The senior social welfare policy sequence helps prepare students for beginning-level generalist practice. The policy sequence includes two courses designed to enable students to acquire skills in understanding and analyzing social problems and social welfare policies and programs affecting different populations. A primary mission of social work is to help create a society in which basic human needs are met for all individuals. To be effective, therefore, social work at all levels must be grounded in a thorough understanding of the social and institutional forces that impact the options and well-being of individuals, groups and communities, and which reflect the dominant values of society. This sequence helps build this knowledge and introduces students to the basic skills required to engage in the process of changing or formulating new social policies and programs in order to serve different populations more effectively.

The second senior policy course is designed to prepare students to systematically analyze contemporary social welfare policy. Through lectures, readings, discussion, and other methods, students will consider the way social problems are addressed through social welfare policy. Because social welfare policy is a huge topic, we cannot address every major social policy issue in the course of one semester. While this course will touch upon several social programs and policies, we will continue to focus attention on the relationship between poverty and discrimination on the basis of class, race and gender. These issues influence society’s definition of social problems and impact the formation and extent of social welfare policies. By utilizing skills in analytic and empirical approaches applied to select issues, students will be better prepared to explore social welfare policy, broadly defined. Several specific social policies of professional concern to social work will be investigated in-depth during the course, including welfare reform, child welfare, and criminal justice.

Since public policy remains the primary means of public resource allocation in the United States, social welfare policy is one of the principal vehicles of social change. The second semester will also emphasize building policy advocacy skills as a key aspect of analyzing and affecting social welfare policy. In this course, student social workers will recognize economic security and welfare policies as a major area for advocacy and social change. Because most social policy decisions affecting human services are political decisions, social workers must understand the political nature of social problems and social policy in order to affect change. An introduction to the role of social work in the social policy advocacy process—including policy formation, lobbying and advocacy, implementation, and evaluation—will thus be examined.

Like the first policy course, this course builds on the first year BSW curriculum. SW 220, 530, 532, 540, 541, and 620 are prerequisites. In particular, the course requires knowledge of theories of individual behavior gained in SW 530 (Human Behavior in the Social Environment) and especially knowledge of theories of community and organizational behavior gained in SW 532.
(Community and Organization Dynamics and Human Behavior). It also requires an understanding of empirical research and analytic skills gained in SW 540 and SW 541, the social work research sequence.

The course is linked to advanced practice classes and field practicum because students learn how policies affect practice environments. Also, the course emphasizes the need for social work practitioners to participate in changing and formulating new policies and program dimensions when these are needed to serve client needs more effectively. Students will apply what they learn from this course to their practicum settings.

II. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

At the completion of the course, students should be able to:

A. Perform written analyses of social policy that demonstrate an ability to apply a policy analysis framework and the key concepts of unintended consequences, power, and a strengths-based approach. (Reflects BSW Objectives 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 and 9)

B. Understand the political and legislative processes essential for achieving major policy and program change in the social welfare policy arena. (Reflects BSW Objectives 5, 8, 9, and 12)

C. Demonstrate an understanding of the mechanisms and effects of oppression, discrimination and economic disadvantage as they relate to social policies and programs. (Reflects BSW Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 and 10)

D. Assess how economic, political, and social systems shape social welfare policy, especially with respect to economic security. (Reflects BSW Objectives 3, 4, and 8)

E. Demonstrate an understanding and commitment to the core social work ethics and values of social and economic justice as they pertain to creating, developing, and changing social welfare policy. (Reflects BSW Objectives 2, 3, 4 and 10)

III. CURRICULUM THEMES

Strengths Perspective – In the policy sequence, students learn to analyze social problems, but they also learn how problems are socially defined and learn to identify existing strengths, capacities, and resources. Students learn to recommend policy and program changes that have the potential to positively affect social and economic well-being by building upon existing strengths, capacities, and resources.

Critical Perspective – Students in the policy sequence learn to critically analyze social problems and social welfare policies and programs by examining: (1) competing theoretical perspectives on what leads to social and economic well-being, and (2) competing ideological perspectives on the role of government in assuring the social and economic well-being of citizens. Common components of various social welfare policy analysis frameworks are used to encourage critical thinking and reflection. An important part of the development of a critical perspective in this course is the thorough examination of underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions about the
interplay between human behavior and well-being that are at the heart of all social welfare policies and programs.

**Social Justice** – Social and economic justice is at the heart of the social problem, policy and program analysis sequence. Students in this sequence learn to analyze and shape policies and programs with the goals of advocating for populations at risk, ending oppression and discrimination, and promoting social and economic justice. For example, the redistribution of tangible economic resources in order to close the gap between rich and poor is one of the primary content areas of the social welfare policy and program analysis sequence.

**Diversity** – Eradicating oppression and its particularly negative effects on our society’s ability to value diversity on the bases of race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability, culture, age, religion, spirituality, and sexual orientation is central to our work together in this sequence. A key part of social problem, policy, and program analysis is identifying how various policies and programs have simultaneously created and maintained advantage, or privilege, for some groups and cumulative disadvantage and oppression for other groups. Valuing diversity requires that social workers end institutionalized oppression in the form of discriminatory policies and programs, and that we build alternate policies and programs that celebrate, affirm, and enhance the strengths, contributions, and social and economic well-being of diverse groups and populations.

**IV. THE LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE**

As an applied social science, social work draws on knowledge and skills from multiple disciplines as well as from the liberal arts. Analyzing social problems, policies, and programs requires knowledge about theories, research, and perspectives that is available to us from fields including history, sociology, religion, political science, art, psychology, and economics. One special contribution of this sequence is its content on using interdisciplinary resources in analyzing social problems, policies, and programs.

**V. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES AND VALUES**

Consistent with our professional values, this course helps students build knowledge and skills in order to analyze, and make changes in, social welfare policy and program with the overall purpose of enhancing social well-being. The professional values of justice and equity guide this work.

**VI. PREPARATION FOR PRACTICE WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS**

Social welfare policies and programs that help us value diversity in tangible ways on the bases of race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability, culture, age, religion, spirituality, and sexual orientation are of special concern in this sequence. Throughout the class, readings, class discussions, and assignments focus on diversity issues in order to help students understand the differential impact of social welfare policies and programs on various population groups; and the role of social work in shaping policies and programs that celebrate and affirm diversity.
VII. **TOPICS**

1. Welfare Reform, including Trends toward Devolution and Privatization
2. Child Welfare
3. Aging and Elderly Policy
4. Housing and Homeless Policy
5. Criminal Justice Policy
6. Immigration Policy
7. Alternative Visions: Equity and Justice in the Welfare State
9. Policy Practice as an Integral Part of Social Work Practice

VIII. **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

A. Possible Texts


B. Other Readings


Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (2000). *The facts about welfare*. Topeka, KS.


**IX. RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENTS**

Students in SW 621 have a variety of assignments. For example, exams, short papers, and learning logs might be used to assess Educational Outcomes A, B, D, F, G, H, and I. At the end of this document are two recommended assignments. The first, an applied social policy analysis paper, is designed to assess progress on Educational Outcomes A, C, D.

The second recommended assignment, an advocacy analysis paper, is designed to assess student knowledge of ways to bring change about, and what they have you learned about role of social work in affecting change (Educational Outcomes B, D, E).
X. GRADING

BSW GRADING SCALE

A   94-100
A-  90-93
B+  87-89
B   83-86
B-  80-82
C+  77-79
C   73-76
C-  70-72
D   60-69
F   59 and below

Incomplete grades. A temporary grade of Incomplete may be assigned to a student who, for a reason beyond the student’s control, has been unable to complete the required work in a course on time. It is the student's responsibility to request an Incomplete from the instructor. A request signed by the student and the faculty member must be on file when grades are submitted. A student may not enroll in a course sequential to one in which he or she has an I or F letter grade. An incomplete not removed by the end of the next semester will be changed to an F.

The Master syllabi should specify:

B. Attendance policies for BSW courses. For example: Class attendance is very important. More than two absences could result in the loss of all your attendance points. More than four absences will result in failure in this class. If you have missed two classes, please arrange an appointment with me to discuss the reasons for the absence and to arrange for make-up work that will count toward your class participation points. Points are deducted for missing class and coming to class late (3 pts. for each absence/lateness).

Individual instructors’ syllabi should specify the following:

C. The weighting of each assignment in the course and the dates by which they are done.

D. For every assignment, explain the standards used for grading.

E. If class participation is part of the grade, indicate what this means. For example, if 10 points are awarded for class participation, one point will be deducted for every class missed.

F. Indicate the policy on late assignments, e.g., they are not accepted and treated as an “F” grade or the grade is reduced by ____ for each day, week, etc.

G. Indicate how final grades will be determined
XI. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Students who have special educational needs of any kind, including those related to learning disabilities, other disabilities, English as a second language should discuss necessary accommodations with the instructor within the first two sessions of the course. The university and School of Social Welfare are committed to provide supportive programs and accommodations to assist students who have special learning needs to successfully meet course expectations. In particular, students who feel that they have a disability that may require accommodation should advise the instructor of such disability and desired accommodation as soon as one obtains written documentation of the disability. The instructor will work with the student and the office of Services for Students with Disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations.

Please notify the instructor if your religious observances conflict with class or due dates for class assignments so we can make appropriate arrangements.

XII. RECORDING AND SHARING RECORDINGS OF LECTURES

Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. On request, the instructor will usually grant permission for students to audio tape lectures, on the condition that these audio tapes are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

XIII. HIPAA REGULATIONS

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires that any personal information that may identify a person must be removed to protect confidentiality. Confidentiality applies to both classroom discussions and to written work. Please follow these simple, yet essential guidelines:

- Always disguise the name and other personal identifying information when you speak and write about a person, following the guidelines established by HIPAA.
- If writing in great detail about a client, ask permission from the client.
- Share nothing about specific clients, agencies or other students outside of the classroom.

Any information shared with the class/instructor will be confidential, within the limits defined by the Code of Ethics and state guidelines.

**Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.**

XIV. INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY

Provide students with information on how to see and/or reach you.
XV. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather students should call

- Lawrence: the University (785) 864-SNOW, or if hearing impaired and have TTY/TDD equipment, (800) 766-3777
- Edwards Campus: (913) 897-8499
- KCKCC Campus: (913) 334-1100

to determine if classes have been cancelled. Class will be held if classes have not been cancelled, and students should contact the instructor if weather or driving conditions make it impossible for them to get to class.
Recommended Assignment:
Applied Social Policy Analysis

This assignment builds upon the comparison and critique of different models of social policy analysis completed in SW 620. It requires that you analyze a social (welfare) policy of your choice using one of the policy/program analysis frameworks from the class readings. You are expected to critically analyze some aspect of social policy or a specific social program (for example, the 1996 welfare reform law, the privatization of child welfare in Kansas, Food Stamps) using the specific policy analysis model you have selected.

Your paper should include a brief introduction that describes the social policy (or program) you have chosen, and the policy analysis framework you will utilize. In your paper, please address the following questions:

- What is the aim or goal of the social policy (or program)?
- To what extent is the social policy/program successful? For example, are the intended beneficiaries receiving services?
- What are the limitations/weaknesses of the social policy/program?
- Are there any unintended consequences as a result of the policy?
- What is the role and influence of power (economic, political, and/or social) on the social policy?
- How did the policy analysis framework you used help your analysis and understanding of the specific social policy or program?

There are three parts to this assignment:

1. You must turn in a one-page outline of your policy analysis paper. The outline should include your chosen social policy/program, the specific policy analysis framework you intend to use, and a brief narrative of the proposed paper. You should also include any sources you have identified to date. The outline is worth 5 points, and is due _________________. No extensions or late outlines accepted.

2. Complete a policy analysis paper utilizing the outline above. The paper should be approximately 7-8 pages, double-spaced, using APA format. Please do not write a longer paper. You must have a minimum of six sources for your paper, including three peer-reviewed journal articles. The paper is worth 20 points, and is due _________________. Late papers will be penalized two points per day.

3. Present a five-minute, in-class oral summary of your policy analysis paper. The presentations are worth five points and will occur during the last class session.
RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENT: 
POLICY BRIEF

Overview

The policy brief is a document which outlines the rationale for choosing a particular policy alternative or course of action in a current policy debate. It is commonly produced in response to a request directly from a decision-maker or within an organization that intends to advocate for the position detailed in the brief. Depending on the role of the writer or organization producing the document, the brief may only provide a targeted discussion of the current alternatives without arguing for a particular one (i.e. those who adopt the role of ‘objective’ researcher). On the other end of the scale, i.e. advocates, the brief may focus directly on providing an argument for the adoption of a particular alternative. Nevertheless for any case, as any policy debate is a marketplace of competing ideas, the purpose of the policy brief is to convince the target audience of the urgency of the current problem and the need to adopt the preferred alternative or course of action outlined and therefore, serve as an impetus for action.

As this is a “brief” the page limit is 2 pages. You are encouraged to be creative with the format. Your brief can look like a narrative or use bullet points. For this assignment you may use footnotes (i.e. you do not have to follow APA style).

Target audience here is policy-makers who are intelligent but may not have specialized expertise in this area. Concepts should be explained in simple language and avoid using jargon.

DUE DATE: To be coordinated with legislative advocacy day at the state capitol, during the 5-6 session.

The brief should do the following:

1. introduce the issue and define what policy options are available.
2. describe scientific knowledge relevant to the issue and what important uncertainties remain
3. describe current laws and institutions that pertain to the issue
4. describe costs and benefits of available options (who gains and who loses?)
5. based on 1-4 provide advice to the policy maker on which options are desirable or undesirable.

In a sense, you will need to do almost as much research as you would to write a full-length term paper. However, you will need to convey what you have learned in very concise and simple language.
POLICY BRIEF GRADING:

The policy brief will be graded in two parts. A “draft” of your policy brief is due in class on February 13. Each student should bring a copy of the policy brief for their advocacy groups. Students from different groups will read your draft and provide feedback using a rubric that will be distributed in class. The final version of your policy brief is due the morning of February 20th, which is also the NASW Legislative Day Visit.

GRADING CRITERIA (FOR THE FINAL):

- Executive summary (15pts).
- Context and importance of the problem (15pts.)
- Critique of policy option(s) (20pts.)
- Policy recommendations (20pts.)
- Sources consulted or recommended (10pts.)
- Writing style (20 pts), including: Clarity, Grammar and spelling, and proper citation of sources.

Additional resources for writing policy briefs are located in the Course Documents folder on the Blackboard course website.

Note: Each group member should turn in copy of the Group Feedback Form located on the back of the syllabus. Extra copies may also be downloaded from the Assignments folder on the Blackboard course website.
RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENT:
DIFFERENT VOICES REPORT

Working in your advocacy group, each person in the group (or as a whole) should do at least two of the following options and compile a group report. (this report can follow the format of the Difference Voices Paper from SW 620-Fall 2006).

(1) Attend a committee meeting about the legislation;
(2) Observe Senate or House floor debate on your legislation or a related topic;
(3) Interview a legislator (or his/her staff), an advocate, and/or a bureaucrat; and or
(4) Attend a community meeting that focuses on policies in your topic area.

This assignment entails looking at a particular policy or program from multiple perspectives. Clearly identifying the different voices and their positions is an important advocacy and policy analysis skill.

Your paper should include the following:
1. A statement that discusses:
   a. how the different people you observed or interviewed defined the social problem the policy is intending to address (10 pts),
   b. how they viewed the policy recommendations (positive or negative) (15 pts)
   c. how that person feels the policy impacts the social problem and would they advocate for the policy or not. (15 pts)

2. Include at least two suggestions on how the policy could be changed for the better. (20 pts)

3. A summary of the similarities or differences among the voices and how that has informed your own practice wisdom. (20 pts)

4. Writing style for clarity, spelling/grammar and APA. (20 pts)

DUE DATE: To be turned in the 12-13th session or the week prior to Spring Break.

Your report should be 6-8 pages, double-spaced, with 12-point type and 1-inch margins. It should have at least two new references. References for all papers should be in APA format.
Recommended Assignment:
Advocacy Project Proposal & Report

This assignment is a group policy advocacy project. Working in your advocacy group, devise and undertake some form of action to educate and/or effect policy change. You may develop your own project, or join an existing project that is sponsored or organized by a local social welfare organization. Please inform your instructor if your policy advocacy project overlaps substantively with your group project in SW 612. The group projects for SW 621 and SW 612 are required to be separate and distinct projects. Students who engage in an advocacy project for SW 621 that does overlap with SW 612, will need to provide detailed information for how the two projects are distinct and what goals the student has for each of the two projects.

This assignment requires good planning skills, so start early. Ideally projects will take place after the legislative session (and after spring break). All projects must be completed in time to submit your final report on the due date.

Your project proposal is due on the tenth session or the week prior to Spring Break. The proposal should be 2 pages addressing the following:

- Project name, background information, date and/or timeline
- Goal of the project and specific objectives
- Target group or audience (Who are the stakeholders that you wish to target with this project? Who will participate in the event/project?)
- Activities and or planning steps anticipated to carry out the project.

The final report should include the following:

- Background (5 pts.)
- Logistics (Where, when and what did you do?) (5 pts.)
- Assess the impact of your policy advocacy project. (What potential impact did the project have on the proposed target group? What did group members learn from or gain from completing the project?) (15 pts.)
- Discuss the process of preparing for and implementing the project (What worked well? What challenges did you encounter? What would you do differently?) (15 pts).
- What have you learned about the policy context for this topic? How does the public feel about the problem or issue? Has there been any positive or negative movement as of late? (15 pt.)
- How do issues of race, religion, class, income, gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or other categories shaping systems of oppression impact social justice topic? (15 pt.)
- What new terms or concepts have you learned about in the course of this task? Name them and explain what they mean. (10 pt.)
- Writing style (20 pts), including: clarity, grammar and spelling (5 pts.), and APA style.

The final report is due on last session of class. Your report should be 6-8 pages, double-spaced, with 12-point type and 1-inch margins. It should have at least four references including two peer-reviewed journals and/or books.