THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WELFARE

MASTER SYLLABUS
SW 982  Social Welfare Policy Seminar

I. PURPOSE AND FOCUS
The purpose of this seminar is to develop advanced skills in analyzing and critiquing social welfare policies and programs, making recommendations for change, and effectively communicating the results of their work. Our primary focus is on federal and state social policies in the US, but the seminar also includes opportunities for students to learn from the social policy experiences of other countries. The central question we address in this seminar is “How do various social welfare policies and programs affect the social and economic well-being of individuals, groups, communities, and societies?” In the context of this broad inquiry, we explore the inter-disciplinary literature in our areas of interest, and apply what we know from prior research to our analyses of policy and program innovation, development, implementation, and research.

We begin by comparing and critiquing an array of social policy analysis frameworks including strengths based approaches. As the seminar progresses, students research and analyze social welfare policies and programs with special attention to the core social work values of justice and equity. Students also learn to analyze the ways in which social conditions, values, and ideologies shape the definitions of social problems as well as the development, implementation, and evaluation of social welfare policies that impact those problems. Ways in which policies differentially impact diverse populations is highlighted. Special attention is given to policies and programs that affect economic well-being and security throughout the life span.

The seminar in social welfare policy helps doctoral students build policy analysis skills. Secondarily, this course enhances research and scholarly presentation skills. These skills are vital components of the foundation that social work researchers and educators need in order to be successful in their future scholarship. With solid abilities in social policy analysis, social work researchers and educators can better guide social workers in their efforts to value diversity, advocate for populations at risk, end oppression and discrimination, and promote social and economic justice.

II. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES
After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

A. Compare and contrast different frameworks for understanding social welfare policy innovation, development, implementation and evaluation.
B. Analyze and critique specific social welfare policies using these frameworks.
C. Explain how social welfare policy is shaped by the complex interplay of history, theory, ideology, research, legislation, appropriations, court decisions, and regulatory processes.
D. Demonstrate an advanced understanding of problems of discrimination, oppression, and poverty as they are reflected in social policies and related programs.

E. Demonstrate the ability to keep the individuals, groups, and communities impacted by specific social welfare policies at the center of one’s social policy analyses.

F. Articulate the ways in which social work scholars use policy analysis skills, knowledge, and abilities to (1) guide social welfare policy innovation, development, implementation, and evaluation (2) inform social policy debates and (3) train social workers for policy practice.

G. Demonstrate the ability to: (1) research empirical findings from studies on the relationship between specific policy approaches and the well-being of individuals, groups, communities and/or societies (2) evaluate the efficacy of a specific social welfare policy in enhancing well-being, directly and/or through the provision of human services, by completing a comprehensive analysis (3) make suggestions for a policy innovation or modification that has the potential to enhance social welfare and (4) communicate the results of social welfare policy analyses to scholarly audiences.(5) Write a publishable quality manuscript, targeting a specific professional journal.

III. TOPICS

- Comparing and Contrasting Frameworks for Social Welfare Policy Analysis
- Social Policy and the Welfare State: Historical, Theoretical, and Ideological Perspectives
- Common Components of Social Welfare Policy Analysis Frameworks
  - Basis of Allocations, Benefits, Provisions (Who?)
  - Nature of Social Provision (What?)
  - Design of Delivery Systems (How delivered?)
  - Sources of Funds and Systems of Transfer (How funded?)
- Income and Asset Poverty
- Direct Spending and Tax Expenditures for Social Welfare
- Social Insurance Policies and Programs
- Public Assistance Policies and Programs
- Values and Ethics in Social Welfare Policy Planning, Implementation, and Analysis
- Applying Analysis Frameworks to Social Welfare Policies
  - Child Poverty and Child Welfare
  - Economic Security and Older Adults
  - Housing, Health, and Hunger
- Mental Health and Social Services
- Civil Rights and Social Inclusion

- Policy Making and Policy Practice
- Research Skills for Social Welfare Policy Analysis
- Policy Research