

Introduction to Social Policy

Social Policy 201
Winter 2010
School of Education and Social Policy
Northwestern University

Tuesdays and Thursdays,
6:00 pm to 7:20 pm
Annenberg Hall, Room G32

Instructor: Marvin Cohen
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Teaching Assistant: Michael Barber
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Course Description: This course will introduce students to social policy through a general analysis of some of the major social welfare programs in the U.S. and an assessment of the underlying values that contribute to the evolution of these programs. In addition, we will examine the processes by which social policies are developed, debated, adopted, administered and refined. A substantial portion of the course will be devoted to social welfare policies designed to improve the lives of low income Americans, including Social Security, welfare, education and healthcare programs. Students will explore the interaction of various policies and programs including housing assistance, the Earned Income Tax Credit, Food Stamps, child care subsidies, child support, public education and Medicare and Medicaid. The course will include a broad overview of social policy issues that will likely continue to be the focus of national debate during the next decade and beyond. Each student will be given the opportunity to explore the complexities of a specific policy and develop skills to analyze, assess and offer recommendations for policy development and improvement.

Course Requirements:

Students will be expected to become familiar with the basic purposes and constructs of contemporary social policy.

In addition to the assigned readings and lectures, 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 or his choice. The topic must be proposed no later than **January 14th**, and the paper is due **February 16th**.

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 – February 4th

Final exam – due by 5:00 p.m. on March 15th

Class 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. I encourage you to volunteer your thoughts and to interact both with me, our teaching assistant, Mike Barber, and with your classmates. Because social policy decisions

in American life are always the result of collective thinking and give and take, we will endeavor, in some small way, to reflect that process in our class. In assessing the group assignments I will consider your level of engagement and creativity to be as important as the substance of your ideas.

Students in this course are expected 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 that are submitted as email attachments must also be delivered in printed form. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern, visit: <http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/>. If you need a copy of the brochure visit the SESP Student Affairs Office.

REQUIRED READINGS

What Government Can Do: Dealing with Poverty and Inequality. 2000. Benjamin I. Page and James R. Simmons. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare. 2004. Jason DeParle. New York, Viking.

Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap. 2004. Richard Rothstein. Washington, D.C., Economic Policy Institute.

Building a Real "Ownership Society." 2005. J. Larry Brown, Robert Kuttner, and Thomas M. Shapiro. New York, The Century Foundation Press. On-line.

The Lost Art of Democratic Narrative: Story Time. Robert B. Reich March 28, 2005. On-line.

The ITEP Guide to Fair State and Local Taxes: A Primer on Fair and Adequate Taxation – and How to Achieve it in Your State. 2005. Casey Cabalquinto et al. Washington, D. C. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. This document will be handed out in class. Also on line.

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America. 2001. Barbara Ehrenreich. New York, New York, Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

Her Most Difficult Call: When is a mother so troubled, or troubling, that a welfare worker must take her kids from her? Daniel Bergner. New York Times Sunday Magazine July 23, 2006. Search by title and author on Google.

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.

Swamp Nurse: What's the best hope for the first child of a poor mother? Katherine Boo. The New Yorker. February 6, 2006. Found on the website of the New America Foundation listed under the writings of senior fellow, Katherine Boo.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies. 1995 (2nd Edition). John W. Kingdon. New York, Longman – Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

It Takes a Nation: A New Agenda for Fighting Poverty. 1997. Rebecca M. Blank. Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press.

“They Take Our Jobs” and 20 other myths about immigration 2007. Aviva Chomsky. Boston, Beacon Press.

The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time. 2005. Jeffrey D. Sachs. New York, The Penguin Press.

Early Childhood Interventions: Proven Results, Future Promise. 2005. Lynn A. Karoly, M. Rebecca Kilburn and Jill S. Cannon. Santa Monica, California. Rand Corporation.

Fads, Fallacies and Foolishness in Medical Care Management and Policy. 2007. T. R. Marmor, editor. New Jersey, World Scientific

From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development. 2000. Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, Editors. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. Washington, D.C. National Academy Press.

The Healing of America: A global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care. 2009. T. R. Reid. New York. The Penguin Press

The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy. 1987. William Julius Wilson. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

There Are No Children Here. 1991. Alex Kotlowitz. New York, Doubleday.

A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League. 1998. Ron Suskind. New York, Broadway Books.

A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government. 1999. Garry Wills. New York, Simon and Schuster.

The Working Poor: Invisible in America. 2005. David K. Shipler. New York, Vintage.

The Conscience of a Liberal. 2007. Paul Krugman. New York, W.W. Norton and Company

The Second Bill of Rights: FDR’s Unfinished Revolution and Why We Need It More Than Ever. 2004. Cass R. Sunstein. New York, Basic Books.

Higher Ground: New Hope for the Working Poor and Their Children. 2007. Greg J. Duncan, Aletha C. Huston and Thomas S. Weisner. New York, N.Y., Russell Sage Foundation.

The State of Working America 2006/2007. Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein and Sylvia Allegretto. Economic Policy Institute. Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press.

The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America. 2005. Johnathan Kozol. Crown.

Saving Social Security: A Balanced Approach. 2004. Peter A. Diamond and Peter R. Orszag. Washington, D.C. Brookings Institution Press.

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.

Social Security: The Phony Crisis. 1999. Dean Baker and Mark Weisbrot. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Useful Web Sites

Annie E. Casey Foundation – Kids Count

Berkley Media Studies

Brookings Institution

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Center on Law and Social Policy

Center for the Study of Social Policy

Century Foundation

Chicago Metropolis 2020

Child Trends

Children’s Defense Fund

Families USA

Future of Children (Packard Foundation) [future of children.org](http://futureofchildren.org)

Heritage Foundation

Institute for Policy Research

Joint Center on Poverty Research

Juvenile Justice Initiative

National Conference of State Legislatures

National Governor’s Association

National Institute for Early Education Research

Pre-K Now

Promising Practices Network (Rand Corporation)

Urban Institute

Voices for America’s Children

Voices for Illinois Children

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 as a rough estimate of how final grades will be determined.

Class participation, group assignments, and class presentations	30%
Short assignments	10%
Term Paper	20%
Mid-term exam	20%
Final exam	20%

**Fall Quarter 2009
Introduction to Social Policy
Social Policy 201**

Class Topics and Reading Assignments

- January 5 Class 1
Introduction
Course overview, Goals and Expectations
Brainstorming Assignment due next class
- January 7 Class 2
Low Income Work
Ehrenreich
Brainstorming Assignment due today
Group Assignment due January 19
Term Paper Assignment: Topic due January 14 – Paper due February 16
- January 12 Class 3
Purposes of Government, Definition of Social Policy
Page chapters 1-3
Data assignment due next class
- January 14 Class 4
Data, The Policy Cycle, and “framing” messages
The Lost Art of Democratic Narrative by Robert B. Reich
Data Assignment due today
Term paper topic due today
- January 19 Class 5
Group presentations
Newspaper Assignment due January 26
- January 21 Class 6
Group presentations
- January 26 Class 7
Social Insurance & Social Security
Page chapter 4
Brown et. al. Building a Real “Ownership Society”
Newspaper Assignment due today
- January 28 Class 8
Health Policy
Page chapter 8
**Additional readings to be announced*

- February 2 Class 9
Federal Poverty Level
The Mismeasure of Poverty
Review for Mid Term
- February 4 Class 10
Mid Term - in class
- February 9 Class 11
Early Care and Education, Home Visiting and Child Care
Boo Swamp Nurse
Science, Policy, and the Young Developing Child: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do. by Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D.
Education Assignment – due next class
- February 11 Class 12
Education
Rothstein
Page, chapter 6
Education Assignment due today
- February 16 Class 13
Housing & Economic Development
The Metropolis Plan 2020
Racial Inequality and the Black Ghetto by Alexander Polikoff.
Term Paper due today.... to be shared with peer reviewers
 Note: Peer review protocols will be distributed in class
Tax Assignment - due next class
- February 18 Class 14
Fair Taxes and the Earned Income Tax Credit
Page, chapter 5
ITEP Guide
Tax Assignment due today
- February 23 Class 15
Urban Social Policy
Term Paper Peer Review Feedback due to authors with copies forwarded to me and Mike Barber
- February 25 Class 16
Welfare Reform
DeParle
Child Welfare Assignment - due next class

- March 1 **Revised term papers due by 9:00am**
- March 2 Class 17
Child Welfare
Bergner Her Most Difficult Call
Stermer The Value and Role of Communities in Caring for Foster Children
Child Welfare Assignment due today
- March 4 Class 18
Child Support
In Everybody's Best Interests: Why Reforming Child Support Distribution Makes Sense for Government and Families, by Vicki Turetsky.
The Child Support Program: An Investment That Works, by Vicki Turetsky.
- March 9 Class 19
Immigration
The Candidate Packet
**Additional readings to be announced*
- March 11 Class 20
The Role of Advocacy Groups
Review
Take-home final exam distributed
- March 15 **Final Exam due by 5:00 pm**