SWK-S 302 Law, Inequality, and Poverty (3 cr.)

Course Information

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<th>Spring 2017</th>
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Course Description

In 1996, Congress passed and President Clinton signed a welfare reform bill that represented a sharp break from the past. This course analyzes the origins of the law and its outcomes. The course will review social science and legal thinking about welfare programs and policies, emphasizing how they are influenced by and how they affect trends in the labor market and family structure.

The beginning of the course will be devoted to learning the current state of public assistance eligibility, requirements to continue receiving benefits, and the result of welfare eligibility limits on families. We will also consider articles by two of the most prominent poverty researchers, and how differently the two explain poverty. Particular attention will be given to how several new laws are being implemented and to their consequences for recipients. Are employers willing to hire welfare recipients? Are recipients finding and holding on to jobs? What are the consequences of the new laws for welfare recipients, their children, and the absent parents of their children? More recently, poverty and financial strain has taken on a new look during the credit and housing crisis. What has been the impact of the crisis and what policy reforms have been passed to address these issues? The final part of the course will look at the intersection of poverty and several specific substantive issues. For example, we will discuss how poverty impacts the availability of education resources.

At the conclusion of the course, students should have an extensive understanding of the 1996 welfare reform law and its impact on persons receiving welfare. Students should also have a broad understanding of ways in which poverty impacts other social systems, such as the justice system, the housing market, and education.

Course Objectives

S302-01 Demonstrate understanding of the definitions and measurement of poverty, particularly those definitions and measures utilized by the federal government.

S302-02 Demonstrate understanding of how the experience of poverty affects individual development, and serves as a risk factor throughout the life span.

S302-03 Demonstrate understanding of the trends and dynamics of poverty and the likelihood of experiencing poverty across the lifespan.

S302-04 Analyze theories on the causes of poverty, and critically reflect on the usefulness and limitations of these theories to social work practice.

S302-05 Evaluate research on poverty in terms of its validity and usefulness for developing anti-poverty initiatives.

S302-06 Demonstrate an awareness of how poverty interacts with other social systems.
Required Texts
No text is required, but required readings will be posted each week on Canvas.

Course Content
The class will be conducted using an online format to address the content of the course. Video clips, Word documents, PowerPoint online presentations, course readings, and online weekly discussions may be used to learn the course content. Students will complete projects that will allow them an opportunity to apply the course content. Students are expected to communicate with the instructor during each week via the weekly response assignments, by use of email or telephone.

This online course is a convenient way to broaden knowledge and pursue professional development. Students in this course do not have to be online at any particular time, but rather access the online course environment on a weekly basis to participate in activities and discussion. Students are able to study and complete course assignments when convenient as long as due dates are met. Although not required, it is a good idea to set aside certain days and time each week to complete readings and coursework. Please keep in mind this is a three credit course being taught in six weeks, so the workload will be intense.

The course objectives are achieved through a variety of teaching-learning methods that may include:

- A weekly question posed to students based on the material for the week
- Online readings and links to additional resources
- A real life experience assignment
- A virtual conference with classmates
- Course assignments and homework

**Every Tuesday by 6pm**, I will send a message on Canvas pointing you to the week’s online resources that have been added and providing the week’s question you should respond to by the following Monday at midnight. This weekly response is one of the most important ingredients of the course. Please do not wait until the last minute.

Online participation with the class and instructor is expected. It is also expected that student contributions be thoughtful and be of the quality that demonstrates the significance of professional social work practice.

Course Outline

**Module 1: AFDC becomes TANF**

Dates:

**Overview**

A. Introduction to course
B. Introduction to social welfare policy and history
C. The “end of welfare as we know it”
D. Changes from AFDC to TANF with the 1996 welfare reform legislation
E. The politics of passing welfare reform legislation
F. State sanctions for not meeting eligibility requirements
G. Time limits on aid receipt

Assignments
1. Weekly response question

Readings

Module 2: Opposing Views on Why Poverty Exists

Dates:

Overview
A. The research and conclusions regarding poverty by Lawrence Mead
B. The research and conclusions regarding poverty by William J. Wilson

Assignments
1. Weekly response question
2. Theories on why poverty exists paper

Readings

Module 3: TANF’s Impact on Families

Dates:

Overview
A. The impact of TANF on fathers
B. Marriage incentives
C. Child support requirements instated for TANF receipt
D. Child care benefits
E. Qualitative reports from TANF recipients

Assignments
1. Weekly response question

Readings

Module 4 The Housing and Credit Crisis

**Dates:**

**Overview**

A. Definitions of homelessness
B. The McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act
C. The HEARTH Act
D. The foreclosure Crisis
E. Alternatives to foreclosure
F. The credit crisis
G. The CARD Act

**Assignments**

1. Weekly response questions
2. Client resources assignment

**Readings**

1. Federal Definition of Homelessness. Retrieved from End Homelessness Website

Module 5 The Intersection of Poverty and Social Issues

**Dates:**

**Overview**

A. Introduction to Constitutional Equal Protection
B. What Equal Protection means and analysis
C. Why equal education is not guaranteed by the Constitution
D. HIV/AIDS health care and poverty
E. The AIDS epidemic in Africa

**Assignments**

1. Weekly response question
2. Post poverty research presentation

**Readings**

Module 6 Research on Poverty Virtual Conference

Dates:

**Overview**
A. This week the class will have a virtual conference on poverty.
B. You will post your presentation and comment upon others.
C. Please see the assignments section of the syllabus for more information.

**Assignments**
1. All ten required comments

**Readings**
1. Please review and comment upon your classmates’ powerpoint presentations.

**Assignments and Grading**
More specific instructions for each assignment will be posted on Canvas. Instructor also will discuss details or answer any questions related to assignment during the class and office hours.

All assignments should be produced on a word processor (or typed), double spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, carefully edited and proofed, using no smaller than a 12 point font, and conforming to APA style (6th ed.)

**Assignments**
1. Weekly responses to the readings
   a. **DUE:** ............................................Weekly on Mondays at midnight
   b. **Final Grade Percentage:** ..........5% each (25% total)
2. Response paper to the theories of poverty
   a. **DUE:** .............................................May 21 at midnight
   b. **Final Grade Percentage:** ..........25%
3. Real life experience assignment (client resource book)
   a. **DUE:** .............................................June 4 at midnight
   b. **Final Grade Percentage:** ..........25%
4. Virtual poverty research conference
   a. **POWERPOINT DUE:** .............June 11 at midnight
   b. **COMMENTS DUE:** .....................June 18 at midnight
   c. **Final Grade Percentage:** ..........15% presentation; 10% comments

**Assignment Details**
1. Weekly responses to the reading assignments:

   Each Tuesday for the next five weeks, weekly readings are listed in the syllabus. On the day the reading is assigned, the instructor will send a message to all students and post a question based on the readings. Generally, the assignment will involve a short essay question. Each question should be
answered in Canvas assignments by the following Monday at midnight. The responses will be worth 25% of your final grade, so each of the five responses will be 5% of your grade. Responses may be informal and can typically be answered in approximately three paragraphs. The purpose is to assure your understanding of each week’s material. You may also pose questions regarding the material in your responses and the instructor will respond with a clarification of the material. (25% of course grade)

2. Response paper to theories of poverty:

In this course, we will read articles by two of the most prominent theorists in poverty studies, Lawrence Mead and W.J. Wilson. Consider these two articles and write a three page response. The paper is due on May 21 by midnight. It should be turned in on Canvas assignments. Be sure to answer the following questions in your paper:

a. How does Mead explain the existence of poverty? In your opinion, what are strengths of his argument and what are the weaknesses?

b. How does Wilson explain the existence of poverty? In your opinion, what are strengths of his argument and what are the weaknesses?

c. Overall, which scholar do you believe makes a better argument for why poverty exists? Why? (25% of final grade)

3. Real life experience assignment:

In order to understand the reality of social welfare, it is necessary to step beyond the classroom (or computer in the case of an online class). The following scenario will require you to be a social worker. The assignment is due June 4 at midnight and should be turned in on Canvas assignments.

The profession of social work is premised on the theory of empowerment. Rather than simply helping people, social workers focus on empowering people to help themselves. One of the primary ways of accomplishing this is by connecting people with resources through referrals. Therefore, the more you know about resources in the community and how to find resources, the more effective you will be as a professional. Imagine you work at a social services agency. You have clients coming to you on nearly a daily basis asking for financial assistance. Your supervisor has noticed the trend and has asked you to develop a guidebook of referral sources for the agency. Find at least twelve sources of financial assistance (government or private) to begin the guidebook. The sources should be for the state of Indiana and/or the county where you live. For each source, please list:

1. The type of help available (ex. Financial, food, housing, etc.)
2. Where the money for the source comes from (ex. The government, Catholic Charities, etc.);
3. What restrictions are placed on receiving the help (ex. You must attend religious services, your income and assets must be below a certain amount, etc); and
4. Anything else important to know about the source.

The assignment can be written in list form. It should look like a guidebook resource rather than a traditional paper. No cites needed, but you should include the websites and phone number of the sources you find as a resource in the guidebook. Lengths of the guidebook should not exceed 6 pages (in other words, spend no more than half a page per source). My hope is that this will actually be useful for you in the future as a professional! (25% of final grade)
4. Virtual poverty research conference:

During the end of the course, we will discuss the intersection of poverty and other social issues (education and AIDS). However, poverty affects many, many more aspects of life than what we can cover in six weeks. Please select another social issue of interest to you that we have not covered, such as gender, criminal justice, health (for example) and the issue’s relation to poverty. Topics may be approved by the instructor prior to beginning research if it would make you feel more comfortable that you’re on the right track. You will then conduct substantial research on the issue to complete a powerpoint presentation. If you have the technical skills, videos may also be posted along with the powerpoint, or you may use Prezi. Creativity is encouraged. The presentation should include:

1. A thesis. The thesis should be a general statement regarding how you think poverty is an important aspect of the social issue you have selected.
2. In the remainder of the presentation, use scholarly sources, as well as your own opinions to support your thesis as to why poverty has an impact on the social issue.
3. Include at least 7 different scholarly sources that have studied the intersection of the issue and poverty. Be sure to cite your sources in APA format and have a references slide at the end of the presentation.
4. Also, be sure to include some of your own ideas that have not been borrowed from an outside source.

The last week of class, June 12-18, we will have a virtual conference on poverty. You should post your powerpoint to a forum on Canvas that the instructor will set up. Presentations must be posted by June 11 at midnight. You should then examine the presentations by your classmates, and make substantial comments on at least 10 presentations (at least two paragraphs). The comments may include questions. Your comments and questions must be posted by June 18 at midnight. Your grade for this assignment will reflect both your own presentation as well as the comments you posted for others. (25% of final grade – 15% presentation; 10% comments)

Grading Standards

Papers are graded on the quality of the final product not on the effort you extended completing them. The grade of A is reserved for truly outstanding work that goes beyond basic requirements.

Grades of A reflect Excellence. Excellent scholarly products and academic or professional performances are substantially superior to the “good,” “the high quality,” “the competent,” or the “satisfactory.” They are unusual, exceptional, and extraordinary. Criteria for assignments are not only met, they are exceeded by a significant margin. Excellence is a rare phenomenon. As a result, relatively few BSW students earn A grades.

Grades of B signify good or high quality scholarly products and academic or professional performance. Grades in the B range reflect work expected of a conscientious student in a professional program. Criteria for assignments are met in a competent, thoughtful, and professional manner. However, the criteria are not exceeded and the quality is not substantially superior to other good quality products or performances. There is a clear distinction between the good and the excellent. We expect that most BSW students will earn grades in the B range—reflecting the good or high quality work expected of competent future helping professionals.
Grades of C and C+ signify work that is marginal in nature. The scholarly products or professional performances meet many but not all of the expected criteria. The work approaches but does not quite meet the standards of quality expected of a student in a professional school. Satisfactory in many respects, its quality is not consistently so and cannot be considered of good or high quality. We anticipate that a minority of BSW students will earn C and C+ grades.

Grades of C- and lower reflect work that is unsatisfactory. The products or performances do not meet several, many, or most of the criteria. The work fails to approach the standards of quality expected of a student and a future BSW-level professional. We anticipate that a small percentage of BSW students will earn unsatisfactory grades of C-, D, and F.

**Grading scale**

Grade minimums are as follows [Note: grades below a C are Unsatisfactory in the BSW Program]:

- **A** 93% Excellent, Exceptional Quality
- **A-** 90% Superior Quality
- **B+** 87% Very Good, Slightly Higher Quality
- **B** 83% Good, High Quality (expected of most BSW students)
- **B-** 80% Satisfactory Quality
- **C+** 77% Marginal, Modestly Acceptable Quality
- **C** 73% Marginal, Minimally Acceptable Quality
- **C-** 70% Unsatisfactory Quality

**Course Policies**

1. **Attendance**

   Attendance is essential for both the benefits of learning from fellow students and discussing information not contained in your text. In an online class, this means communicating with the professor and completing assignments. Weekly assignments not completed on time will receive a 0.

2. **Participation**

   Participation will be taken into account in assigning final grades if a student is on the border between grades.

3. **Late paper policy**

   Major assignments are due at midnight on the days indicated in the course outline. These assignments will incur a penalty of 10% per day, including weekends, for each day it is overdue. Students should make every effort to submit assignments in a timely manner to ensure their success in the course, and the small weekly assignments will receive 0 points if late.

4. **Paper formatting**

   Effective social work practice requires good writing skills to communicate information accurately and concisely to others involved in helping client systems. For this reason, formal writing assignments in social work courses will be evaluated both for the content and ideas presented and for the clarity of
that presentation. All out-of-class assignments should be typed in a simple font (such as Times New Roman or Arial), double-spaced, numbered, with one-inch margins. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) is to be used, including in-text references and the bibliography.

5. Evaluations

Students will have the opportunity to evaluate the course and the instructor at the end of the course, but students are encouraged to provide feedback concerning the course and instruction at any time during the semester.

6. Respect

It is the expectation that while discussing topics related to the diversity of human experience and its effects on individual functioning, lively discussion will ensue. Students are expected to respect the opinions and feelings of other students and the instructor, even if they differ from their own. Students are encouraged to keep the NASW’s Code of Ethics in mind while discussing concepts and feelings in preparation for practice.

7. Passing Grade Policy

In accordance with the Indiana University School of Social Work grading policy, students must earn at least a “C” to pass this course.

8. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

During the semester, if you find that life stressors are interfering with your academic or personal success, consider contacting Counseling and Psychological Services. All IUPUI students are eligible for counseling services at minimal fees. CAPS also performs evaluations for learning disorders and ADHD; fees are charged for testing. CAPS is located at 719 Indiana Avenue, 2nd Floor and can be contacted by phone (317-274-2548). For more information, see the CAPS web-site at: life.iupui.edu/caps/.

9. Open Door Policy

Students are encouraged to contact the instructor for any reason. Please see the first page of this syllabus for multiple ways to contact me. I am interested in your development as a student and as an individual. If I can be of any help to you, please let me know. I am available to discuss future goals, obstacles to academic success, and concerns about the course, in addition to just getting to know one another.
Bibliography


