Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
School of Social Work

Conceptual Foundations of Social Work and Social Welfare
16:910:645
FALL 2019

Professor: Cassandra Simmel, MSW, PhD
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casimmel@gmail.com (alternative address)

Office hours: By appointment
Classroom hours: Tuesdays, 9:00 – 11:30
120 Albany St (main School of Social Work) Tower 1, 2nd Floor, Room A
Please note that class WILL meet on November 26 (week of Thanksgiving)

Course Website: https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal (need NetID & password)
Sakai Help Desk: sakai@rutgers.edu or 732.445.8721.

Course Description and Overview: From a multi-disciplinary perspective, this course critically examines scholarship and contemporary debates addressing social work and social welfare structures, provisions, and systems of care. The course addresses the unique aspects of American social service systems, comparative perspectives, race and gender dynamics in contemporary social work policies and practice, and the dynamic nexus of state institutions, the social work profession and social service provision. Understanding the evolution of how social problems are construed, examined, and addressed is a key facet of this course.

Course Learning Objectives:
1. To understand the evolution of American social welfare policies, services, and programs in a historical perspective;
2. To examine the trends and patterns in social welfare expenditures and types of social welfare programs in the US;
3. To explore the interrelationship between class, race, and gender dynamics in how they affect social welfare policy and services;
4. To address the complexity and diversity in the construction of social problems;
5. To examine how the concepts of adequacy, efficiency, equality, equity, and social justice influence social welfare policy and drive programs’ scope, structure, and implementation;
6. To become familiar with the intersection of research, policy development, and social change;
7. To examine how research influences diverse policy interventions;
8. To become familiar with the conceptual frameworks that examine the efficacy of public policy interventions toward American social problems.
Course Materials

The following texts are required for the course and should be purchased:

Edin, K. J. & Shaefer, H. L. (2015). *$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Boston, MA: Mariner Books. *(to be read before 1st class meeting of semester)*


The following podcast series (available for free) is an instrumental part of the course. Why I use this series will be discussed in the first class meeting.

[https://crooked.com/podcast-series/the-wilderness/](https://crooked.com/podcast-series/the-wilderness/)

All other course readings (articles and chapters) are available as PDF files on the course Sakai website.

**Background Reading/Prerequisite:** While there are no formal prerequisites for this course, it is helpful for students to have some familiarity with the history of social welfare provision in the United States. Students without this background may be interested in reading Trattner, Walter (1999; 6th edition). *From poor law to welfare state: A history of social welfare in America*. New York: The Free Press. This is a lively and easily readable overview of the evolution of American social welfare provision.

**Suggested Readings:** A list of suggested readings is provided at the end of this syllabus. These are texts, materials, reports, websites, and journal articles that may be relevant to your personal topical areas and/or be of supplemental value to your graduate training and career. Although these are not required materials, I suggest that students carefully review this list of readings as they may facilitate understanding aspects of this course that are unfamiliar to you as well as provide guidance in your ongoing training as scholars of social work and US social welfare policy.

**Useful Websites, Blogs, Documentaries,& Podcasts:** Also at the end of this syllabus is a partial list of websites and resources that may be useful in understanding more about course topics/materials and for your course assignments. Please let me know if you have suggested additions for this list.

**Course Assignments**

Course assignments are designed to support your mastery of the course material and readings and your scholarly development—in this course and beyond.

1. **Class participation** (15% of grade)

Productive, collegial participation in seminar discussions and completion of readings are required. Student discussion is an integral component of the learning process and each student will be
expected to keep up with the weekly readings to insure informed participation in seminar discourse. All students are encouraged to read major newspapers and periodicals such as the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, The Atlantic, and The Economist and listen to National Public Radio (NPR) regularly so that you can discuss current issues related to course topics and readings. Additionally, the primary newspaper for New Jersey (The Star Ledger) is a good source of current relevant state issues that may be related to the course. Please note that punctuality is also incorporated in this class participation grade, including both the beginning of class and returning to class after the break.

II. Reaction Statements (15% of grade) & Discussion Questions (10% of grade)

As indicated on the syllabus, for most weeks, Reaction Statements on each of the required readings for the week are to be submitted to the Sakai drobox by 5 pm on the Monday before class. In addition, students are to prepare discussion questions/comments for each of the readings; these are intended to stimulate a lively and engaged discussion in the seminar. Please bring these questions with you to class and be prepared to raise them in the seminar.

I will permit each student to skip ONE week (of their choice) for submitting Reaction Statements (but students still need to do the reading for that week and submit Discussion Questions).

Please submit the Reaction Statements and Discussion Question to the appropriate Sakai dropbox and label the file with your last name and the appropriate week of the semester. For example: Simmel_Discussion_Week 2

III. Brief Policy Papers (20% EACH)

Students are required to select two topics pertinent to understanding the evolution and formulation of two distinct social welfare problems. Topics for these assignments must be pre-approved by me; as such, a 1-2 paragraph summary of your proposed topic for Paper 1, along with 2-3 relevant references must be submitted in writing no later than Week 4 (September 24). The Brief Policy Paper 1 is due in Week 7 (October 14). The proposed topic for Paper 2 is due Week 10 (November 5), with the Brief Policy Paper 2 due in Week 15 (December 10).

In addition to spending time during class meetings to discuss paper topics, it is expected that students will meet individually with me to further discuss their progress.

Please submit the Brief Policy Papers to the appropriate Sakai dropbox and label the file with your last name and type of assignment. For example: Simmel_Policy topic; Simmel_Brief Paper1.

IV. Final Presentation (20%)

Students are required to prepare a 15-20 minute presentation on a policy related to one of the social problems reflected in their Brief Papers. Each student must use PowerPoint and also prepare a substantive outline of their presentation (due in Sakai dopbox). These are to be submitted on Monday December 2 (Week 14) or Monday December 9 (Week 15) by 5 pm.
(depending on which week the student is presenting. Presentations will be during Week 14 (December 3) and Week 15 (December 10).

****** Details on the specifics of these assignments are summarized on a handout that is posted on the Sakai site. Late papers are not accepted.

**Summary of Course Grading**

- Class Participation: 15%
- Reaction Statements: 15%
- Discussion Questions: 10%
- Brief Policy Paper 1: 20%
- Brief Policy Paper 2: 20%
- Final Presentation: 20%

**Library Resources**

The Rutgers University library system contains a very impressive collection of resources and materials that will be of great assistance to you as you complete assignments for this class and your other graduate courses. Many, if not all, of these materials can be accessed online. The university librarians offer free tutorials on using the in-library services and online search tools; understanding how to navigate these tools is vital for ensuring timely, thorough, and proficient completion of the assignments for this course. The library liaison to the School of Social Work, Karen Hartman, is available for assistance and consultation, via both email and in-person. Here is her contact information:

Email: khartman@rulmail.rutgers.edu Phone: 848-932-6104

A research guide that may be of particular relevance to this course: Social Welfare Policy [http://libguides.rutgers.edu/socialworkpolicy](http://libguides.rutgers.edu/socialworkpolicy)

It includes a page, Government Agencies that contains links to state and federal websites relevant to policy research. Both government analysis resources and think tank links can be found on the Policy Analysis page. And the Writing and Organizing page includes links for APA style help as well as information about RefWorks, a web-based bibliography and citation manager.

Additional resources include the library research guides for Public Policy [http://libguides.rutgers.edu/content.php?pid=254097&sid=2097728](http://libguides.rutgers.edu/content.php?pid=254097&sid=2097728) as well as those for related topics.

To see more available social work guides, use this path from the Libraries’ homepage, [www.libraries.rutgers.edu](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu) Find>Research Guides>Social Work
Additional Course Logistics

1. Attendance at all class meetings is required. Furthermore, timeliness and punctuality also matter; consistent lateness will negatively affect class participation grades. This includes punctuality following class breaks.

2. If any student has a disability that may interfere with completing the assignments, s/he should contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations. Please see the Rutgers website [https://ods.rutgers.edu/contact-ods](https://ods.rutgers.edu/contact-ods)

3. Please notify me as soon as possible about any conflicts with class meetings and/or course assignments due to religious observance or holiday.

4. Please turn off cell phones once class starts. I do permit—and welcome—the use of laptops during class time, but this is for the sole purpose of note-taking and related classroom activities. Trust me, I will give you the evil eye (and likely call on you) if I even *suspect* you are on Facebook/Twitter (or whatever) during class time. Feel free to use cell phones during the class break.

5. Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments must be typed and adhere to APA format.

6. All assignments are to be completed by scheduled due dates; submission instructions are listed on the detailed description of assignments and may vary depending on the assignment. Late assignments will **not** be accepted, unless there is an absolute, bona fide, documented, last minute emergency.

7. **Respect for colleagues.** This course will cover material and topics that can be provocative and polarizing, with room for multiple and diverse perspectives. We all must attempt to treat each other with respect when opinions are shared. Language should be used that recognizes diversity and is respectful of others. It is also imperative, as we struggle with complex political, personal, and social issues, that we not silence others by assuming that there are "politically correct" lines of thought that cannot be challenged.

8. The School of Social Work adheres to a strict ethical code of conduct. This includes strong prohibitions against plagiarism. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with me, before the assignment is due. I am happy to meet individually with students and advise on this matter, **before** any work is submitted to me (or to your colleagues). For more information on Rutgers’ policy on plagiarism please consult Rutgers Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures, see: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/) Additional guidance on this matter can also be gleaned from the APA manual.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes/Assignments</th>
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<td><strong>Week 1:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>September 3</td>
<td>Course introduction and overview</td>
<td>Read $2 a Day before semester begins</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2:</strong> September 10</td>
<td>Problems Affecting Individuals, Families, and Communities</td>
<td>Reading Discussion Questions &amp; Reaction Statements due in Sakai Dropbox 9/9 5 pm</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3:</strong> September 17</td>
<td>Politics and Scope of Welfare State Provision</td>
<td>Reading Discussion Questions &amp; Reaction Statements due in Sakai Dropbox 9/16 5 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 4:</strong> September 24</td>
<td>Politics and Scope of Welfare State Provision</td>
<td>Reading Discussion Questions &amp; Reaction Statements due in Sakai Dropbox 9/23 5 pm; Brief Paper 1 topics also due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 5:</strong> October 1</td>
<td>Fiscal Considerations in Welfare State Provision</td>
<td>Reading Discussion Questions &amp; Reaction Statements due in Sakai Dropbox 9/30 5 pm.</td>
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<td><strong>Week 6:</strong> October 8</td>
<td>Social Welfare Provision in Comparative Perspective</td>
<td>Reading Discussion Questions &amp; Reaction Statements due in Sakai Dropbox 10/7 5 pm</td>
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<td><strong>Week 7:</strong> October 15</td>
<td>Brief Policy Paper 1 DUE Informal Presentations in Class</td>
<td>Brief Policy Papers 1 due in Sakai Dropbox 10/14 5 pm</td>
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<td><strong>Week 8:</strong> October 22</td>
<td>Considering Gender in Welfare State Provision</td>
<td>Reading Discussion Questions &amp; Reaction Statements due in Sakai Dropbox by 10/21 5 pm</td>
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<td><strong>Week 9:</strong> October 29</td>
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<td>NO in-Class Meeting. Writing Week for Students</td>
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<td><strong>Week 10:</strong> November 5</td>
<td>Nexus of Research, Policy, and Practice</td>
<td>Reading Discussion Questions &amp; Reaction Statements due in Sakai Dropbox 11/4 5 pm; Brief Policy Paper 2 topics due</td>
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<td><strong>Week 11:</strong> November 12</td>
<td>Spotlight on Policy Topics</td>
<td>Reading Discussion Questions &amp; Reaction Statements in Dropbox 11/11 5 pm</td>
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<td><strong>Week 12:</strong> November 19</td>
<td>Spotlight on Policy Topics: Guest Faculty Panel</td>
<td>Reading Discussion Questions due in Sakai Dropbox by 11/18 5 pm. <strong>NO Reaction Statements</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week 13:</strong> November 26</td>
<td>Retrenchment and the Future of the Welfare State</td>
<td>Yep, we are meeting. Reading Discussion Questions &amp; Reaction Statements due in Sakai Dropbox 11/25 5 pm</td>
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<td><strong>Weeks 14 &amp; 15:</strong> December 3 &amp; 10</td>
<td>Student Presentations &amp; Brief Policy Paper 2 due in Sakai Dropbox on December 10 by 5 pm</td>
<td>Presentation Power Point slides and outlines due in Sakai Dropbox by Dec. 2/9 at 5 pm.</td>
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Detailed Course Outline

**Week 1: September 3**  
Course Introduction & Overview  
In this initial class we will review the course syllabus and assignments and also discuss students’ policy and research interests. We will also begin discussing $2.00 A Day (Edin & Shaefer)

**Note:** the first two-three class meetings are intended to serve as a bridge between Masters’ and Doctoral level policy coursework.

**Required Reading Assignment**  

**Week 2: September 10**  
Problems Affecting Individuals, Families, and Communities  
In this class meeting, we will discuss how social problems are operationalized. How do ideology and values influence the construction of social problems? In this session we begin discussing the subjectivity inherent to the methods for how social problems are recognized, promoted (or not), and addressed. We will also begin exploring the concept of social justice and continue discussing $2.00 A Day (Edin & Shaefer).

**Required Written Assignment**  
- Reaction Statements  
- Reading Discussion Questions

**Required Readings**  

PLUS  
- Listen to the Wilderness Podcast, Chapters 1 and 2 (available from Crooked Media) [https://crooked.com/podcast-series/thewilderness/](https://crooked.com/podcast-series/thewilderness/)

**Week 3: September 17**  
The Politics and Scope of the US Welfare State & Social Safety Net  
This session will cover an introduction to the scope of the welfare state and the social safety net and how social policies and programs are designed and executed. It will also provide the historical context for how the US social safety net has evolved over the past several decades.

**Required Written Assignment:**  
- Reaction Statements  
- Reading Discussion Questions
**Week 4: September 24       The Politics and Scope of Welfare State Provision**

In this course meeting, we will continue discussing the US welfare state, with a particular focus on the analysis of how social programs deliver services.

**Required Written Assignment:**
- Reaction Statements
- Reading Discussion Questions
- Topics due for Brief Policy Paper 1

**Required Readings:**

**PLUS**
- Listen to the Wilderness Podcast, Chapters 4 and 5 (available from Crooked Media) https://crooked.com/podcast-series/thewilderness/

**Week 5: October 1           Fiscal Considerations of Social Welfare Provision**

In this class meeting we will talk about money! After a global overview of the federal budget process, we will then discuss the vital role of financing (i.e., source of funds) in the policy process and techniques for analyzing the fiscal aspects of policies and programs. We will also discuss the intersection of federal/state budgets and social problems. How are social programs valued, in the monetary sense? This topic will also tie in with our exploration of social justice.
Heads Up: The reading for Week 6 is fairly substantial.

Required Written Assignment:
- Reaction Statements
- Reading Discussion Questions

Required Readings:

PLUS
- Listen to the Wilderness Podcast, Chapter 8 (available from Crooked Media) https://crooked.com/podcast-series/thewilderness/

Please, also, browse the following websites/articles:
- National Priorities: https://www.nationalpriorities.org/interactive-data/database/
- Washington Post (M. Kornhauser) April 14, 2017). People don’t like paying taxes. That’s because they don’t understand them.

Week 6: October 8 Social Welfare Provision in Comparative Perspective
In this session we will critically examine the evolution and/or retrenchment of the social welfare state on an international level. How do various countries compare with one another (and with the US) in the provision of social welfare services? What are the factors, values, and tensions that have contributed to changes in countries’ welfare state structure?

Required Written Assignment:
- Reaction Statements
- Reading Discussion Questions

Required Readings:

PLUS

• Listen to the Wilderness Podcast, Chapter 6 (available from Crooked Media) https://crooked.com/podcast-series/thewilderness/

**Week 7: October 15**

**Brief Policy Assignment 1 DUE**

**Required Assignments:**

• Brief Policy Paper 1 due
• Please be prepared to briefly recap paper topics in class (this counts toward class participation grade)

**Week 8: October 22**

**Considering Gender in Welfare State Provision**

In this session we will continue to critically examine the evolution and/or retrenchment of the social welfare state, with a focus on how gender is addressed in contemporary models, programs, and policies.

**Required Written Assignment:**

• Reaction Statements
• Reading Discussion Questions

**Required Readings:**


**Optional Reading:**


**Week 9: October 29**

**NO Class Meeting**

We will not have a class meeting this week. It is expected that students will work independently on their assignments for the course.

*Heads Up:* The reading for Week 10 is fairly substantial.
Week 10: November 5   Nexus of Research, Policy, and Practice
Research is a critical ingredient in the dynamic between policy and social action; research also fosters the refinement of operationalizing social problems. Through the identification of factors and issues that promote the provision of services, as well as the barriers and gaps that impede policy and/or program implementation, research is a necessary partner in advancing policy and program efforts. Yet, empirical evidence can also be overlooked, misunderstood, or misused in these efforts too. The following book is a case study of sorts that exemplifies this relationship between policy, research, and practice.

Required Written Assignment:
- Reaction Statements
- Reading Discussion Questions
- Topics due for Brief Policy Paper 2

Required Reading:
- (browse) Website for American Academy for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Communicating Science Workshops. https://www.aaas.org/Communicating-Science-Workshops

Week 11: November 12   Policy/Program Spotlight: Poverty
In Weeks 11-13 of this seminar, we will highlight specific issues, trends, policies, and innovations that are emblematic of the social safety net in the US. These topics span employment & labor, substance use, poverty, and income support programs.

Required Written Assignment:
- Reaction Statements
- Reading Discussion Questions

Required Readings: (please read the materials in the following order)

Optional Readings:
Week 12: November 19  Guest Faculty Panel

Specific details still to be determined; guest panelists include:

**Guest Panel:**
- Professor Laura Cuesta [https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/faculty-staff/laura-cuesta](https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/faculty-staff/laura-cuesta)
- Professor Anna Haley [https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/faculty-staff/anna-haley-lock](https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/faculty-staff/anna-haley-lock)
- Professor Jamie Lister

**Required Written Assignment:**
- NO Reaction Statements due
- Reading Discussion Questions

**Required Readings:**
- TBD

Week 13: November 26  Retrenchment and the Future of the Welfare State

In this session, we will conclude our discussion of the evolution and retrenchment of the welfare state and of potentially innovative solutions for supporting or enhancing the social safety net.

**Required Written Assignment:**
- Reaction Statements
- Reading Discussion Questions

**Required Readings:**
- [538 Blog](http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/universal-basic-income/) (April 25, 2016). *What would happen if we just gave people money?*

**PLUS**
- Listen to the Wilderness Podcast, Chapters 7 & 9 (available from Crooked Media) [https://crooked.com/podcast-series/thewilderness/](https://crooked.com/podcast-series/thewilderness/)

Week 14: December 3  Student Presentations

Week 15: December 10  Student Presentations + Brief Paper 2 due in Sakai dropbox by 5 pm

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Noteworthy Websites, Blogs, Podcasts, & Documentaries

State & Federal websites:
- New Jersey Legislature  www.njleg.state.nj.us
- New Jersey Judiciary www.judiciary.state.nj.us
- Library of Congress  http://thomas.loc.gov/
- U.S. Senate http://www.senate.gov/
- U.S. House of Representatives  http://www.house.gov/
- US Federal Laws www.govtrack.us
- General federal government information  http://www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/Federal/Executive.shtml
- Congressional Quarterly  http://library.cqpress.com/

Non-partisan websites for data and information about social policies and elections:
- Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)  http://www.cbpp.org/
- Congressional Budget Office  https://www.cbo.gov/
- Kaiser Family Foundation (terrific resource on health care reform)  http://kff.org/
- Nate Silver’s 538 site  http://fivethirtyeight.com/ (focuses broadly on social policy/elections)

Topic-specific websites/websites for policy organizations that focus on social welfare issues:
- Center for Law and Social Policy  http://www.clasp.org/
- Institute for Research on Poverty (University of Wisconsin)  http://www.irp.wisc.edu/index.htm
- Annie E Casey Foundation  http://www.aecf.org/
- Rutgers Center for State Health Policy  http://www.cshp.rutgers.edu/
• The Sentencing Project, Interactive Map (contains statistics for different states)  
  http://www.sentencingproject.org/map/map.cfm
• Urban Institute http://www.urban.org/
• Urban Institute example: Welfare Reform: Ten Years Later  
  http://www.urbaninstitute.org/toolkit/issues/welfarereform.cfm
• Children’s Bureau, U.S. DHHS: Child Maltreatment.  
• Children’s Bureau, U.S. DHHS: Adoption Foster Care Analysis and Reporting  
• Child Trends http://www.childtrends.org/
  http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_understanding.html
• National Association for Social Workers http://www.socialworkers.org/
• NASW Advocacy http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/

Interesting blogs & podcasts of note

• Marketplace: http://www.marketplace.org/
• Pod Save America: https://getcrookedmedia.com/here-have-a-podcast-78ee56b5a323
• Pod Save the People: https://getcrookedmedia.com/pod-save-the-people-56bc42af53d
• Sunday Civics: https://www.sundaycivics.org/
• Nicholas Kristof: On the Ground http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/
• Planet Money: http://www.npr.org/sections/money/

Documentaries of Note:
  o American Winter. HBO Documentary Films (2013)
  o A Place at the Table. Magnolia Home Entertainment (2013)
  o The Interrupters. PBS Frontline Documentary (2011).
  o Tough Love. PBS Point of View Documentary (2014)
  o Two American Families. PBS Frontline Documentary (2013)

Suggested Readings

Broad Focus on Social Welfare History, Policies, or Programs:
     colonial times to the present (second edition). Boston: South End Press.
     perspective. Social Services Review, 78(3), 429-446.

Focus on Specific Topics of Social Welfare Policy:


