I. Catalogue Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the three phases of the social policy making process: a) problem identification; b) policy design and development; and c) policy implementation. A special emphasis is placed on increasing students’ ability to critically examine each of these phases from a liberatory consciousness-informed social justice perspective. From a skills perspective, this course seeks to train students to be effective advocates for racial and social justice by increasing students’ ability to recognize and analyze various forms of institutionalized marginalization and/or oppression in the design and implementation of social policy and helping them develop effective strategies of change.

II. Course Overview

The policy development process will be examined with an emphasis on exploring the relationship between how social problems are constructed and how social welfare policies are designed and implemented. We begin by examining the processes through which social problems come to be identified, given salient meaning, and prioritized in the public’s consciousness. We then turn to the legislative process, and examine how the social, economic and political power of various groups interact with the institutional structures of America’s political and policy process to inform what solutions are and are not considered with regard to various identified problems. Finally, we will review the policy implementation process, tracing how policies are translated and transformed from abstract legislative and bureaucratic language to concrete forms of organizational practice. As we review each of these phases of the policy process, we will employ the tools of critical and anti-racist analysis in order to gain deeper insights on how institutionalized forms of exclusion, marginalization and exploitation are established, grown and maintained—as well as how they might be dismantled through the efforts of smart, savvy and committed agents of social justice.
III. **Place of Course in the Curriculum**

The course is required of undergraduate social work majors who have successfully completed Social Welfare Policy and Services I (910:311).

IV. **School-Wide Learning Goals**

To prepare students for practice and leadership roles in the fields of social work and social welfare. This goal is operationalized using three of the ten Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) prescribed competencies. These competencies are as follows:

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly;
2. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment; and
3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgment.

V. **The Council on Social Work Education Core Competencies and Course Specific Learning Objectives**

The BASW Program at Rutgers is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). CSWE uses the Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) to accredit and reaffirm baccalaureate and master-level social programs in the United States. These accreditation standards can be reviewed at cswe.org or by accessing the link on the Rutgers School of Social Work homepage.

The Rutgers School of Social Work has integrated the competencies and their associated practice behaviors within its curriculum. This course will assist students in developing the following core competencies: Competency #3 Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice and Competency #5 Engage in Policy Practice.

Course specific learning objectives include:

- To understand how social problems are defined, and the role that values and social, economic and political power play in that process;
- To understand the political, social, economic, and organizational factors that influence policy formulation and implementation;
- To apply conceptual frameworks and empirical research in the analysis of social policy;
- To understand the effects of problem construction, policy design and policy implementation and administration on individual and social well-being, and particularly how those effects vary between various socio-economic, demographic and identity-based populations;
- To examine the interlocking and interactive relationships between the elements of the social policy hierarchy: social welfare policy, public and private / non-profit social welfare organizations and social work practitioners;
- To learn about the role of social workers as advocates for social justice in the legislative, bureaucratic, organizational and community arenas;
• To consider the role of social work values and ethics in policy making and the various realms of social justice advocacy.

VI. Required Texts and Readings

Required Text:

Jansson, B.S. (2018). Becoming an Effective Policy Advocate (either 8th or 9th ed is fine). Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole Publishing Company. This is available at the RU bookstores and through other online sites (such as amazon.com). Note: we do not use the computer software associated w new editions; therefore, it is entirely legitimate to buy a used copy of the textbook.

Additional Required Readings and Ereserves:

All articles are available on the course CANVAS web site as well as electronic reserve. In a few instances, a reading will be available through a weblink. To access the electronic reserves, visit the libraries website at www.libraries.rutgers.edu. Articles on electronic reserve are listed under the name of Associate Teaching Professor Eric Lock, SWPS II undergraduate lead instructor.

Students are expected to attend class and to complete readings on a timely basis so that they can participate effectively in class discussions. All readings are required except for the “additional recommended readings” which are suggested.

Accessing the New York Times:


Students can also access the New York Times through the RU library system.

To do so:

1. Connect to the Factiva database: http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/indexes/factiva
2. On the Factiva landing page, hover your cursor over the NewsPages link in the top, black navigation bar, and then select Factiva Pages.
3. You should then be on the newstand page; on the right will be the Wall StreetJournal, scroll down, the next paper listed will be the NYTimes
4. The pulldown menus allow you to go back two weeks, and the pulldown menu on the right allows the user to select a section, e.g., "national desk.", etc.

VII. Course Policies and Requirements

Students are expected to attend class and to complete readings on a timely basis so that they can participate effectively in class discussions. All readings are required except for the “additional recommended readings” which are suggested. In addition, students are expected to take
leadership roles in class discussion or exercises. Three missed classes and/or excessive lateness will result in a grade reduction and could result in course failure.

**CANVAS Website**
All non-textbook readings, lecture slideshows, handouts and assignment-related materials will be accessible via a CANVAS website, specifically designed for each section of this course.

**Turn It In** Turn it in is an anti-plagiarism software program that helps faculty and students detect instances of plagiarism. When students submit their papers to their ecompanion dropbox, turn it in will automatically review them. Students are highly encouraged to submit their papers for turn it in review before submitting them to the instructor for a grade. Turn it in can assist students in identifying unintentional incidents of plagiarism and assist students in strengthening their writing skills. For more information please see [https://onlinelearning.rutgers.edu/turmitin](https://onlinelearning.rutgers.edu/turmitin)

**Email**

Please note that all students in this course are required to have a Rutgers University email address. Emails will not be sent to other addresses. Course notices, including information related to the weekly discussion topics, weekly lecture outlines, and revisions in due dates and assignments, will be sent to these addresses. If you do not have a Rutgers email address or are not receiving emails for this course, please contact the RU HelpDesk at 732-445-HELP (4357).

When contacting the instructor by email, you must identify yourself fully by name, class title and section number in the subject header of your email. I will check my email daily. I will respond to course related questions within 24–48 hours.

Additional materials may be distributed in class. Students not attending a class in which materials are distributed are responsible to obtain the materials from the instructor or from fellow students.

**In Class Technology Policy**

Students are permitted to use laptops/tablets in the classroom for note taking or any course related assignments. Students are not permitted to use laptops/tablets for internet surfing, email, working on material for other classes, video watching, social media, or any other activity not related to the course. Students are similarly expected to turn off their phones during class and place them outside of view. If there is an emergency situation in which your phone must remain on during class, please notify the professor to obtain permission. If a student is found to be in violation of this policy, they will no longer be allowed to bring a laptop into the classroom and they will lose a full letter grade on their final course grade.

**VIII. Assignments and Grading**

**Assignment Grade Breakdown**

1. Discussion Boards 15%
2. Assignment 1: Social Problem Analysis 20%
3. Assignment 2: Group Advocacy Project 25%
4. Final Exam (weeks 10-14) 30%
5. Attendance and Participation 10%

Discussion Board Submissions: Due midnight before class session
About ½ page, around 100 words (15% of overall grade).

For most weeks, I will post a few questions of the week in the module area of the course web page. These questions will ask you to comment on some main points in the readings that I want to emphasize. Students will be expected to submit comments on at least ONE of the questions of the week for: Weeks 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11 & 13. Discussion posts will be due by midnight the night before class.

Assignment 1: Social Problems Assignment Due: Sunday Feb. 21 midnight
About 5 pages, double-spaced. 15% of total grade

Students may choose one of three options for this assignment (detailed instructions for each options will be provided via course website):

A. Issue Framing Analysis
B. Claims Making Analysis
C. Power Analysis

Assignment 2: Group Lobbying Assignment: Due: Week 10 (upload midnight before class)
25% of total grade (15% memo; 10% presentation)

Students will be assigned to groups to complete a group lobbying assignment. Groups will choose a topic of interest and prepare a brief policy memo and an oral presentation. Groups will also meet with their federal representatives and/or their aides. Groups will receive a grade for the presentation and memo. All group members will receive the same letter grade.

Detailed Instructions on this assignment will be available on course website--

Final Exam

A study guide will be available a week before the exam

Please note that the designation of letter grades for BASW courses are as follows:

A       90-100 %
B+      85-89 %
B       80-84 %
C+      75-79 %
C       70-74 %
D       60-69 %
F       Below 70 %

*Scores to be rounded up at .5

IX. Course Evaluation

Rutgers University issues a survey that evaluates both the course and the instructor. This survey is completed by students toward the end of the semester, and all answers are confidential and anonymous. In addition, the instructor will ask students to participate in an anonymous mid-point course evaluation and will elicit student feedback regarding the course content and instructional methods throughout the semester. If students are having difficulties with the course or have constructive suggestions, it is highly recommended that they inform the instructor.
X. **Policy on Academic Integrity**

All work submitted in an undergraduate course must be your own.

It is unethical and a violation of the University’s Academic Integrity Policy to present the ideas or words of another without clearly and fully identifying the source. Inadequate citations will be construed as an attempt to misrepresent the cited material as your own. Use the APA citation style which is described in the Publication manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition.

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or footnote. Acknowledgement is required when material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one’s own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: “to paraphrase Plato’s comment...” and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one’s general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any question about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member.

Plagiarism as described in the University’s Academic Integrity Policy is as follows: **“Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Some common examples of plagiarism are:

- Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.
- Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one’s own words another person’s written words or ideas as if they were one’s own.
- Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.
- Incorporating into one’s work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other nontextual material from other sources without proper attribution”.

For more information regarding the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures, see: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/)

XI. **Disability Accommodation**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a
disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form).

XII. Course Outline

TABLE: THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND THE PUBLIC POLICY MAKING PROCESS

CLASS 1: Overview of Course: Thinking critically about social problems, the policy making process and policy implementation (1/19-20)

The first two weeks of this course focus on establishing the conceptual framework of this course. In this week’s main lecture, we will discuss the layout of the course, emphasizing its three major components: 1) The processes by which social problems get recognized and defined for the public; 2) the processes by which solutions to social problems are formulated and formalized into law; and 3) the processes through which policy solutions (laws) are then transformed into organizational action and individual social work practice.

Beyond that, we will discuss the *analytic lens* through which we will examine these processes. We will return to a conversation we touched on in SWPS I: how to “think structurally” about social problems. This term we will employ that same “structural lens” to think about the processes through which we come to know about social problems and attempt to solve them. When we do this, we are doing a form of “institutional analysis.” We’ll also spend a little time talking about the peculiar political moment we find ourselves in today: where we find ourselves not debating how our democracy should deal with various compelling social problems, but rather whether or not we’re going to have a democracy at all. These are strange times…

And if any of the above seems to you to be dull, rote or irrelevant to social work, pay close attention: because none of it is.

*Mandatory Readings:*


*Suggested Further Reading*

**CLASS 2: Thinking critically about marginalization and racism in the American Policy Making System**  
(1/26-27)

This week we continue our introductory “conceptual pre-requisites” discussion, extending the conversation about how social problems and social policies are formulated to incorporate some ideas about all of that from Critical Race Theory. That is to say, we will consider the idea that the way we talk about social problems, and the way we consider various policy alternatives to dealing with those problems is often done in a way that marginalizes the perspectives, voices and concerns of a variety of communities that traditionally have been outside of the conventional centers of power and decision making in the United States. In other words, we will be confronting a classic question that any good student of politics always is asking: whose voices and interests are organized INTO the policy making process and whose voices and interests are organized OUT of the policy making process—and how does this funny thing happen?

*Mandatory Readings:*

Ian Haney-Lopez (2014) "Strategic Racism" Ch.2 in *Dog Whistle Politics*


Podcast Interview and Short Reading:

Isabel Wilkerson and Terry Gross, 2020. NPR’s Fresh Air (Aug. 8) “It's More Than Racism: Isabel Wilkerson Explains America's 'Caste' System.” *(Follow link below to read show introduction and listen to the 35 minute conversation)*


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**SECTION I: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS, POWER AND MOBILIZATION**

Having laid the conceptual foundation of the class in weeks 1 & 2, we are now ready to embark upon the “narrative arc” of the course. Remember: in week one, we laid out the full life cycle of the policy making process: it starts with a) the problem definition phase; then moves to b) the abstract sphere of the legislative (policy making) phase; and finally resolves in c) the implementation phase of the process. Weeks 3-5 cover the first stage (A): critically examining the process by which social problems come to be collectively identified, legitimated, and defined in such a way that it can be addressed through collective social action. These may seem like pretty straight-forward things. As we will see, there is nothing straight-forward about any of this. Finally, week 6 is sort of a bridge between the problem construction phase and the policy construction phase.

**Learning Objectives of this section:**

*By the end of this section of the class you will*

- Understand the concept of the Social Construction of Social Problems
- Understand what “issue framing” is and how to recognize how political actors shape and frame audiences’ understanding of social problems.
- Understand the significance of political, economic and social power in determining what does and does not become recognized as a social problem.
• Understand what political mobilization entails and in particular how groups who represent marginalized populations determine their agenda setting strategies.


You might be asking yourself: if we’re studying the policy-making process, why do we start by examining social problems? The reason is simple: policy is usually a response to an identified social problem.¹ Because of this, the critically minded student of the policy making process will want to ask some

Mandatory Readings


Pick one of the following two examples of how policy issues get politically constructed

• Sommer, Udi; et al. 2020. The Politicization of Women’s Health and Wellbeing; Basel Vol. 12, Iss. 9, 3593.


Video Links:


Suggested Further Reading


¹ By the way: we might note that this may indicate something dysfunctional about our system: we tend to think about collective / government action only in relation to problems, as opposed, say, to a strengths-based approach that might envision policy as an aspirational tool for pursuing positive goals.
CLASS 4: The Claims Making Process (2/9-10)

Mandatory Readings


Video Links:
What does social construction really mean? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpSoosy9ws
What is a Social Construction? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BDDMByOxJU

Suggested Further Reading


CLASS 5: The Analysis of Power, Powerlessness & Quiescence (2/16-17)


Video Link: TBA

CLASS 6: Social and Political Mobilization (2/23-24)


Video Link: How to put the power of the law in the people’s hands (Ted Talk by Vivek Maru)
https://www.ted.com/talks/vivek_maru_how_to_put_the_power_of_law_in_people_s_hands?language=en

Recommended Video: The Hand that Feeds
The Hand that Feeds follows a group of undocumented NYC food service workers as they organize and mobilize, with the law working against them, for fair wages and necessary benefits.
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2812712/

Suggested Further Reading


ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE: Sunday, Feb. 27th (midnight)
SECTION II: THE POLICY MAKING PROCESS AND ENGAGING IN POLICY ADVOCACY

Learning Objectives of this Section:

By the end of this section of the class, you will

- Understand the agenda setting process in terms of both the “landscape” of the American legislative process, including the role of the various branches and levels of government in developing and implementing public policies.
- Understand the various connections between the social construction of social problems, political mobilization, and the agenda setting process.
- Understand the basics of the lobbying process, including how lobbying organizations seek to frame both the issues they are presenting as well as the policy proposals they are lobbying for and against.
- Understanding what is a policy proposal generally, the function proposals play in the policy making process and the components of good policy proposal memos.
- Gaining experience and insight into describing and critically analyzing policy proposals according to a formal framework for critical analysis.
- Gaining experience in preparing and presenting a formal policy advocacy action.

CLASS 7: The Agenda Setting Landscape: understanding America’s Federalist Legislative & Bureaucratic Structure (and a peek at the role of the non-profit sector) (3/2-3)

Jansson, Chapter 4, “Understanding the Ecology of Policy in Governmental, Electoral, Community, and Agency Settings”


Additional Resources:

- **Infographic**: review the following infographic from Norwich University online.
  https://online.norwich.edu/academic-programs/resources/intergovernmental-relationships-how-three-levels-government-work:

- **Video Link**: PBS “Crash Course” video on Federalism
  Crash Course Government and Politics #4: Federalism.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0gosGXsI

Supplemental Reading


**Suggested Further Reading**


**GROUP CHECK-INS:** Groups will meet during class to discuss their lobbying assignment, assign tasks and consult with Instructor about their projects.

**SPRING BREAK**

*Mar. 12-20*

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**CLASS 9: Lobbying and Legislative Strategy**

Jansson, Chpt 9, “Presenting and defending Policy Proposals” (pp. 274-297; also see Chapter 11, figure 11.7, example of a policy brief)

*Skim the following Guides giving advice on how to develop policy proposals*

- Young, Eóin & Lisa Quinn, 2017 *The Essential Guide to Writing Policy Briefs*. International Centre for Policy Advocacy, Berlin, Germany. Pages 9-21. [Note: the entire pamphlet is excellent, with examples of good policy briefs after page 21, so be sure to check out the whole document]


**Additional Resources:**

PBS: Crash Course on social policy basics [https://thecrashcourse.com/topic/usgovernment/](https://thecrashcourse.com/topic/usgovernment/)

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**CLASS 10: Group Presentations**

(Assignment 2 Memo and Presentation Due)

Groups will have approximately 15-20 mins to present their policy proposal to the class. See Assignment 2 instructions for more details on the presentations.
SECTION III: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Learning Objectives for this Section:

- Recognizing the policy implementation process as a separate and distinct part of the overall policy making process.
- Distinguishing the legislative and implementation phases of policy making from one another – and recognizing social work’s close proximity to the latter phase.
- Understanding the definition of Human Service Organizations
- Understanding and utilizing formal tools for the critical analysis and assessment of human service organizations’ form, function and performance.

CLASS 11: The Policy Implementation Process: Two Ways to Examine the Implementation Process


*Supplemental Further Readings:*


CLASS 12: The Policy Implementation Process. How Implementation is a Social Justice Issue:

The problem of Administrative Burdens (4/6-7)


*Suggested Further Reading*


CLASS 13: Examining Human Service Organizations from the Outside-In


CLASS 14: Examining Human Service Organizations from the Inside-Out


Final Essay Exam

Due Thursday, May 5 at 11:59pm.
# Course Outline

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<td>Thinking critically about marginalization and racism in the American Policy Making System</td>
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<td>Social and Political Mobilization</td>
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