I. Course

A. Catalog Description
Provides skills of policy analysis for assessing the safety net and other U.S. social policies, the impact of policy on disadvantaged individuals and communities, and comparative social welfare policies.

B. Purpose
This course is the required advanced social welfare policy course. The course examines alternative models of policy development and applies them to current issues in social welfare. It emphasizes frameworks for policy research and secondary analysis of governmental data. It provides knowledge of social welfare systems and policies, the impact of policy on clients and communities, and the skills of policy analysis as a means to achieving social and economic justice for oppressed groups. A comparative perspective is included.

II. Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. delineate skills in initiating, formulating, implementing and evaluating social welfare policies and programs;
2. demonstrate a knowledge of cross-cultural comparative perspectives of social welfare systems and several models of social policy and program analysis;
3. describe how political and legislative processes influence social welfare policy and program development;
4. discuss how social work professionals can affect the formulation, implementation and modification of social policies and service delivery systems;
5. demonstrate an understanding of how social welfare policy formulation and program development may exclude oppressed groups from
participation, and how full participation can be insured;
6. demonstrate an understanding of how social welfare policy analysis may be used to advance or hinder the pursuit of social and economic justice;
7. demonstrate the successful application of secondary data sources in the analysis of social welfare policies and services; and
8. demonstrate critical thinking skills in assessing social need, developing potential social welfare policies and program options, and evaluating current social welfare policies.

III. Course Content
This course will include the following topical (content) areas:

1. overview of social policy;
2. governmental social insurance and income maintenance programs;
3. fields of policy practice;
4. alternative welfare programs;
5. the use and application of data sources to analyze policies; and
6. assessing need, developing policies and program options, and evaluating current policies.

IV. Course Structure

Class formats will vary from session to session, depending on session content. Interactive lectures and discussion will be the primary formats; however, in-class exercises, guest speakers, and peer presentations may play a role in class instruction. Students are expected to complete all readings as assigned, as they are a major source of learning in this course.

*The professor reserves the right to alter readings, course topics, and assignments as needed to better accommodate learning goals and time constraints.*

V. General Background Information

**Instructor Consultation.** Scheduled office hours are indicated on this syllabus and are posted outside of the instructor's office door. Other times may be arranged by appointment – please contact the instructor by email to schedule alternative appointment times. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss assignment topics, questions related to course content, or other topics that arise as a result of course content, assignments, and discussions.

**Course expectations.** Regular, on-time attendance is expected; absences will be reflected in your class participation grade. *Three absences will result in an*
automatic grade of “F” for the course.

**Electronic Devices.** You are expected to conduct yourself as a professional in this class. Distractions should be kept to a minimum; cell phones should be turned off before class; no laptops should be utilized during class sessions, except as permitted by the professor.

VI. **Textbooks and Readings**

- Required daily newspaper: Class members are required to read at least one daily newspaper with a focus on current social policies and issues. By the second class, each individual will notify, via email, the course instructor the newspaper he/she will read. Examples of U.S. domestic newspapers include Houston Chronicle, Washington Post, New York Times, Chicago Sun Times, and Wall Street Journal; examples of international newspapers include Daily Telegraph (UK), Times of India, Zaman (Turkey), El Reforma (Mexico), and China Daily. Each week, class will begin with students identifying at least one story of interest.
- Other readings. Readings are required as noted in the syllabus and as assigned during the course of the semester.

VII. **Course Requirements**

The final grade for this course will be based on the following assignments

1) **Class participation and preparedness – 10%**

Active class participation is expected, and is necessary for optimal student learning. We learn from each other; thus, students are expected to come prepared to discuss the weekly readings, as well as broader themes and/or current events that arise around each session’s topic. Debate and discussion of different perspectives is expected; however, students are expected to demonstrate respectful conduct towards one another.

Participation will be assessed using the following criteria:

- supporting flow of discussion (sharing appropriate and relevant content, reading and integrating weekly readings, integrating relevant field experiences, and furthering classroom discussion of session topics);
- active listening; and,
- being respectful in comments and action (including regular attendance and arriving on time, e.g., being late or leaving early reduces this portion of the grade by 1% for each occurrence).

2) **Library Assignment – 15%**
A brief written exercise, three (3) pages, on conducting library research related to policy will be provided prior to Session 4. Students may complete this assignment during the library session, in conjunction with a librarian, or on her/his own time.

3) Written and Oral Assignments – 75%

The three major written assignments (the Social Problem Identification, Comparative Analysis, and the Policy Analysis Brief) will focus on the same problem and policy, selected by the student. Assignments will be graded based on:

1. Adherence to the required elements of the assignment.
2. Quality of analysis and the depth of understanding of the topic.
3. Logical and well-organized presentation of your arguments, and conclusions that are clearly drawn from your arguments.
4. Appropriate use of references, using sources beyond those provided by the instructor. It is your responsibility to ensure all sources you cite are credible.
5. Appropriate grammar and spelling, and evidence the assignment has been proofread.

Students are expected to follow the 6th edition of the APA Publication Manual, use 12 pt. font and 1” margins, and indicate page numbers.

All written assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of the class corresponding to the specified. An assignment turned in after the class but before 5:00pm of the specified date, with be lowered one letter grade; an assignment turned in after 5:00pm of the specified date will be graded “F”.

In addition to the written assignments, each student will present her/his findings in an oral presentation during either session 12 or 13; the assignment of which session will be made by the course instructor during session 10.

A.) Critical analyses– 25%

Social problem identification. Identify a social problem of interest or concern to you based on your social work practice experience. This paper must be referenced with a minimum of five references from all of the following: journal articles, text books, and newspaper articles.

In five (5) double-spaced pages, not including the cover page nor reference page(s), the paper must:

1. provide a clear definition of the problem as you see it;
2. **using critical thinking** –

a) discuss the scope and magnitude of the problem (i.e., how extensive is the problem, how many people are affected, which demographic groups, what are the barriers to addressing the issue, etc.)

b) discuss what causes this issue/problem to exist,

c) describe the specific positive and negative effects of this problem for individuals, families, groups, and society,

d) explain why this problem is of interest to you based on your practice experience, and why you believe it is worthy of policy attention,

e) discuss 1-2 examples of “symbols” (with references) commonly used by members of the public, the media, or politicians in discussing their own definition of this problem,

f) identify a policy addressing this problem that you think you would like to study over the course of the semester.

**B.) Comparative Policy Analysis - 25%**

Building on the critical analysis assignment (above a), identify a policy from another state or locality which addresses the same problem differently; or, if you are studying a national policy, identify a policy from a different country that addresses the same problem. This paper must be referenced with a minimum of five references from all of the following: journal articles, text books, and newspaper articles.

In five (5) double-spaced pages, not including the cover page nor reference page(s), the paper must:

a) Identify and discuss the similarities and differences between the two policies.

b) Explain why you think these similarities and differences exist.

c) Discuss what you have learned through your comparison of the two policies?

**C.) Policy Analysis Brief – 25%**

Building on the critical analysis and comparative policy assignments assignment (above a and b), this assignment is the creation of a two (2) page Policy Analysis Brief that will be presented to an appropriate level policy maker, e.g., local, state, or federal.
The Policy Brief includes a narrative, graphs, tables and other key informational pieces including recommendation(s) for the policy, e.g., support, not support, or support with specified changes.

The brief must include the following elements:

a) specification of the problem the policy seeks to address and a brief summary of its scope and magnitude description of the policy and its key elements;

b) analysis of at least two (2) strengths and (2) weaknesses of the policy, following a policy analysis framework of your choosing; and,

c) identification and justification of at least 2 specific, actionable recommendations that a policymaker could work to implement into law that would improve the policy.

Relevant and the most current data, with supporting citations, must be used to back the major points throughout the brief.

VIII. Evaluation and Grading

The following standard grading scale has been adopted for all courses taught in the college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>96-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92-95.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-91.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-87.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76-79.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>72-75.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>68-71.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-67.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 64%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

IX. Policy on grades of I (Incomplete):

The grade of "I" (Incomplete) is a conditional and temporary grade given when students are either (a) passing a course or (b) still have a reasonable chance of passing in the judgment of the instructor but, for non-academic reasons beyond their control have not completed a relatively small part of all requirements. Students are responsible for informing the instructor immediately of the reasons for not submitting an assignment on time or not taking an examination. Students must contact the instructor of the course in which they receive an "I" grade to make arrangements to complete the course requirements. Students should be instructed not to re-register for the same course in a following semester in order to complete the incomplete requirements.

The grade of "I" must be changed by fulfillment of course requirements within one year of the date awarded or it will be changed automatically to an "F" (or to a "U" [Unsatisfactory] in S/U graded courses). The instructor may require a time period of less than one year to fulfill course requirements, and the grade may be
changed by the instructor at any time to reflect work completed in the course. The grade of "I" may not be changed to a grade of W.

X. Policy on academic dishonesty and plagiarism

Students are expected to demonstrate and maintain a professional standard of writing in all courses, do one’s own work, give credit for the ideas of others, and provide proper citation of source materials. Any student who plagiarizes any part of a paper or assignment or engages in any form of academic dishonesty will receive an "I" for the class with a recommendation that a grade of F be assigned, subsequent to a College hearing, in accordance with the University policy on academic dishonesty. Other actions may also be recommended and/or taken by the College to suspend or expel a student who engages in academic dishonesty.

All papers and written assignments must be fully and properly referenced using APA style format (or as approved by the instructor), with credit given to the authors whose ideas you have used. If you are using direct quotes from a specific author (or authors), you must set the quote in quotation marks or use an indented quotation form. For all direct quotes, you must include the page number(s) in your text or references. Any time that you use more than four or five consecutive words taken from another author, you must clearly indicate that this is a direct quotation. Please consult the current APA manual for further information.

Academic dishonesty includes using any other person’s work and representing it as your own. This includes (but is not limited to) using graded papers from students who have previously taken this course as the basis for your work. It also includes, but is not limited to submitting the same paper to more than one class. If you have any specific questions about plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please raise these questions in class or make an appointment to see instructor. This statement is consistent with the University Policy on Academic Dishonesty that can be found in your UH Student Handbook.

XI. Americans with Disabilities Statement

Whenever possible, and in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, the University of Houston will attempt to provide reasonable academic accommodations to students who request and require them. Please call 713-743-5400 for more assistance. Instructors may not provide accommodations without supporting documentation from the UH Center for Students with Disabilities.

XII. Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Session 1. January 26  

Course overview  
Initial discussion of American social welfare  
Reading  
  • Reisch chp 1
Session 2. February 2  
**Assignment Due:** Notify course instructor of newspaper that will be read on a daily basis

*Critical Thinking – Moving Beyond What I Believe to be Correct*

**Readings**
- [http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/226484](http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/226484)

Session 3. February 9  
**Assignment Due:** Notify course instructor of the social problem that will be studied.

*Conducting policy research – Visit to the library*

**Reading:** review the following site prior to the library visit as this content will be discussed during the library seminar. [http://guides.lib.uh.edu/socialpolicy](http://guides.lib.uh.edu/socialpolicy)

Session 4. February 16  
**Policy Analysis – ways to look at and assess social welfare policy**

**Readings**
- Reisch chp 6
- [http://guides.lib.uh.edu/socialwelfarepolicyanalysis](http://guides.lib.uh.edu/socialwelfarepolicyanalysis)

Session 5. February 23  
**Levels of Policy Development – Federal, State, Local, and Judiciary**

**Readings**
- Reisch chp 7, 8, 9, 10

Session 6. March 2  
**Social welfare in historical perspective**

**Readings**
- Reisch chp 2, 5
- [http://www.socialwelfarehistory.org/](http://www.socialwelfarehistory.org/)
- [http://www.ssa.gov/history/pdf/histdev.pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/history/pdf/histdev.pdf)

Session 7. March 9  
**Value debates in social welfare policy: Social welfare in social, political, economic, cultural context**

**Readings**
- Reisch chps 3, 4

**March 16**  
**Spring Break – No Class**

Session 8. March 23  
**Social Security or Insecurity**
Readings

- Reisch chp 11
- [http://www.ssa.gov/](http://www.ssa.gov/) - specifically read the "benefits" link information

Session 9. March 30  Poverty, Unemployment, Minimum Wage
Readings

- Reisch chp 12
- [http://www.povertyusa.org/](http://www.povertyusa.org/)

Session 10. April 6  Assignment for Oral Presentation

Health and Mental Health Policy
Readings

- Reisch chp 14
- Health in the US, 2013 -- [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/hus13_InBrief.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/hus13_InBrief.pdf)

Session 11. April 13  Social Welfare, An International Perspective
Readings


Session 12. April 20  Presentations

Session 13. April 27  Presentations

Session 14. May 4  Review and Summary