I. Course

A. 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 knowledge of several models of social policy and program analysis;
3. contrast philosophies and approaches to social welfare policy across distinct cultural contexts;
4. describe how political and legislative processes influence social welfare policy and program development;
5. demonstrate ways in which social work professionals can use policy analysis to affect the formulation, implementation and modification of social policies and service delivery systems;
6. 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;
7. demonstrate an understanding of how social welfare policy may be used to advance or hinder the pursuit of social and economic justice;
8. demonstrate the successful application of secondary data sources in the analysis of social welfare policies and services; and
9. 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 policy 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. Readings
Readings are required as noted in the syllabus, and as assigned during the course of the semester. Readings will be available on Blackboard or distributed by the professor.

Please note that readings have been purposefully selected to strengthen students’ critical thinking and encourage healthy classroom debate; it is not expected that students (or the professor) will agree with all perspectives presented.

To stay abreast of current issues, students should read at least one daily newspaper, reflecting diverse political viewpoints, such as: The Texas Tribune, The Houston Chronicle, The Washington Post, The New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal; or international sources, such as BBC News. Students are encouraged to bring articles to class that complement our class discussions or
post them to Blackboard for online discussion.

VI. Course Requirements
The final grade for this course will be based on the following assignments:

1) Class Participation – 10 points

2) Reading Responses – 10 points

3) Assignments Focused on Your Individually-Selected Policy Problem
   Library Exercise – 5 points
   (DUE DATE: 2/15)

   Critical Analyses – 30 points
   (DUE DATES: 2/15, 3/11 at 6:00 p.m., 4/11)

   Policy Analysis Brief – 20 points
   (DUE DATE: 5/9, by 1:00 p.m.)

4) Policy Advocacy Project and Presentation – 20 points
   (DUE DATE: 4/25)

5) Engaging with Politics and Policy – 6 points (includes one extra credit point)
   (DUE DATE: 5/9)

6) Extra Credit: Current Policy Issues – up to 2 points

Assignment details are provided at the end of this syllabus. All assignments are
due by the dates specified above. All assignments due on class meeting days
are due before the start of the class session that day. Late submissions will
be accepted for all assignments except Pop Essay quizzes; however, the grade
value will be reduced by 10% for each day late, including turning in an
assignment after the time deadline on the day it is due. The professor reserves
the right to require any student to consult the Writing Center regarding
assignments in this course.

VII. Evaluation and Grading
The following standard grading scale has been adopted for all courses in the
College:

A  =  96-100% of the points   C+ = 76-79.9%
A- =  92-95.9%              C  = 72-75.9%
B+=  88-91.9%              C- = 68-71.9%
B  =  84-87.9%              D  = 64-67.9%
B-  =  80-83.9%              F  = Below 64%
VIII. **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.

IX. **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 presentations, 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. It also includes securing another person to complete any required activities, assignments, quizzes, papers, or exams in an online course, or in any on-line environment. If you have any specific questions about plagiarism or academic
dishonesty, please raise these questions in class or make an appointment to see the instructor. This statement is consistent with the University Policy on Academic Dishonesty that can be found in your UH Student Handbook.

X. Course Schedule and Assignments

Session 1. January 25  
Course overview

Session 2. February 1  
Defining social problems


Suggested reading:  

TODAY (FEB. 1) IS THE 2016 PRIMARY VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE.

Session 3. February 8  
Conducting policy research – MEET IN LIBRARY, ROOM 10-F

Prior to class, review: http://guides.lib.uh.edu/socialpolicy

SELECT THE SOCIAL PROBLEM YOU WILL BE STUDYING PRIOR TO TODAY’S CLASS.

Session 4. February 15  
Social workers in the policy arena

Read at least two of the following three articles:


Suggested reading:

**SOCIAL PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION PAPER AND LIBRARY EXERCISE DUE**

Session 5. February 22
*Frameworks for policy analysis*


Session 6. February 29
*Social welfare in historical perspective*


Suggested reading:
Hudson, R. B. (2005). The new political environment in

**Tuesday, March 1**

**Super Tuesday** – Primary Election Day in Texas

**Session 7. March 7**

*Value debates in social welfare policy: Social welfare in social, political, economic, cultural context*


Students will be assigned to one of the following teams, and will be expected to read a set of brief newspaper articles, op-eds, and policy briefs corresponding to the selected topic. Specific readings TBD:

1) *Financing Higher Education*

2) *Climate Change*

**Comparative Policy Analysis Part One**

Due Friday, March 11 at 6:00 P.M.

**March 14.**

Spring Break – NO CLASS

**Session 8. March 21**

*Policy formulation and implementation*


Read at least one of the following two articles:


Session 9. March 28

*Understanding policy impacts; inclusion and exclusion in policy*


**Suggested Listening/Reading**

Session 10. April 4

*Addressing poverty: Public assistance, social insurance and tax policy*

All students read:

Students will also select one of the following three sets of articles to read prior to the class session:
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families


**Social Security**


**Earned Income Tax Credit**


Session 11. April 11

**Social welfare: An international view**


Session 12. April 18

Health and mental health policy


Suggested Readings

Session 13. April 25

Effectively advocating for policy change

Session 14. May 2

POLICY ADVOCACY PRESENTATIONS
Course wrap-up

POLICY ADVOCACY PRESENTATIONS

May 9

NO CLASS

POLICY ANALYSIS BRIEF DUE BY 1:00 p.m.
ENGAGING WITH POLITICS AND POLICY DUE BY 1:00 p.m.

XI. Americans with Disabilities Statement:
The University of Houston System complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines,
each University within the System strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an academic adjustments/auxiliary aid, please contact the UH Center for Disabilities at 713-743-5400.

XII. Addenda:

Consultation. Scheduled office hours are indicated on page 1 of this syllabus and are posted outside of my office door. Other times may be arranged by appointment – please contact me by email to schedule alternative appointment times. I encourage students to meet with me 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. If you cannot attend class, you are expected to inform me in advance. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact fellow students to obtain missed information.

Blackboard. The course information and readings are posted on this course’s Blackboard site. Please use Blackboard to submit assignments and follow course announcements. Students are encouraged to post and discuss links or articles relevant to course content in order to strengthen the course learning environment.

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.
Course Assignments

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

1) Class Participation and Preparedness – 10 points.
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.

Your 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).

2) Reading Responses – 10 points.
There are 10 class sessions during the course of the semester for which readings are assigned. For each of these sessions, a prompt question based on the week’s readings will be provided on Blackboard. Each student is responsible for picking seven of these sessions (you may choose any seven sessions from among Sessions 2, 4-12).

For each of the seven sessions you select, you are expected to take no more than about 10 minutes prior to class to write down your thoughts in response to the prompt question, based on the week’s readings. Responses should be about ½-1 page in length.

Students may type or write their response by hand and bring it to class. Reading Responses will be collected by the instructor at the very beginning of the week’s class session, and will not be accepted once class has begun. The responses will be assessed based on students’ comprehension and critical application of key concepts from the week’s readings.

(DUE: EACH OF SEVEN CLASS SESSIONS OF YOUR CHOICE, by 1:00 p.m.)

3) Assignments Focused on Your Individually-Selected Policy Problem
All assignments in this category (the Library Exercise, the Critical Analyses, 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 in all written work, 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. *Upload all assignments to the course Blackboard site by the specified dates and times.*

**Library Exercise – 5 points.**
A brief written exercise on conducting library research related to policy will be provided at the beginning of Session 3. Students may complete this assignment during the library session, in conjunction with a librarian, or on your own time.

*(DUE: 2/15, by 1:00 p.m.)*

**Critical analyses – 30 points.**

1) **Social problem identification.** Each student is expected to identify a social problem of interest or concern to you based on your social work practice experience. This problem will serve as the basis for all written assignments throughout the semester. In approximately 4 double-spaced pages, not including a cover page or the reference page(s), your paper must:

a) provide a clear definition of the problem as you see it,

b) *objectively* discuss the scope and magnitude of the problem (e.g., how extensive is the problem, how many people are affected, which demographic groups)

c) discuss *in an objective manner* what are the root causes of this problem,

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

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

f) 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,

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

This paper must be well-referenced, using appropriate resources to support your arguments.
**I encourage anyone who is struggling to narrow down or define your problem to schedule a meeting with me, before completing your Social Problem Identification assignment.**

(DUE: 2/15, by 1:00 p.m.)

2) **Comparative policy analysis.** If you are studying a state or local policy, identify a policy from another state or municipal government which takes a different approach to addressing the problem you identified in your Social Problem Identification paper. If you are studying a national policy, identify a policy from a different country that addresses the same problem. The assignment includes both completion of a table and a narrative discussion:

   **Part One (DUE: 3/11, by 6:00 p.m.):**
   a) Fill out Part One of the table provided on Blackboard to compare the context and goals for each policy. The table can be completed using bullet points. The content of the table must be written in your own words.

   b) A preliminary reference list with resources for the policy of interest in both states/countries must be attached.

   **Parts Two and Three (DUE: 4/11 by 1:00 p.m.):**
   c) Fill out Part Two of the table provided on Blackboard describing key elements of both policies. The table can be completed using bullet points. The content of the table must be written in your own words.

   d) Part Three consists of a narrative discussion, in 3-4 paragraphs:
      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.

A minimum of 4-5 credible sources must be used in the Comparative Policy Analysis. All sources of information both in the table and in the narrative must be cited.

**Identify your comparison policy as early as possible – if you are struggling to identify a comparison policy, please schedule a meeting with me or with Irene Ke, the Social Work Librarian.**

**Policy analysis brief – 20 points.**

The final brief will focus specifically on analyzing the primary policy you have been studying all semester. It will build off of your Critical Analyses and the feedback you have received from the instructor during the semester, and will require modifying the style of how your information is presented in order to communicate effectively about your policy to a policymaker.

As the name suggests, policy briefs are short documents, approximately 2-3 single-spaced pages, focused on providing the most essential information about a policy and recommendations for policy change. Briefs provide important information on-demand for policy makers who are often too busy to read detailed lengthy documents. However, the best policy briefs entice readers to
want to find out more. Tips for the assignment will be provided in class.

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,

b) description of the policy and its key elements,

c) analysis of at least 2 strengths and 2 weaknesses of the policy, following a policy analysis framework of your choosing,

d) a thorough explanation of at least 2 specific, actionable recommendations that a policymaker could work to implement into law that would improve the policy, and

e) an effective justification as to why each of these two recommendations would be successful and should be supported.

Relevant, current data and citations must be used to support your major points throughout the brief.

(DUE 5/9, by 1:00 p.m.)

4) Policy Advocacy Project and Presentation – 20 points.

Students may complete this assignment individually or in teams of up to three students. Students will engage in at least 2-3 forms of political action outside of GCSW to advocate for a specific policy change to promote social justice. Students are responsible for selecting their own desired policy change. Political actions may be in the form of phone calls, letter-writing, campaign volunteering (phone calls, door-to-door canvassing, etc.), testimony presentation, rally attendance, meeting with a legislator, etc.

_Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the professor to receive feedback prior to beginning the project._

Students will make 10-15 minute class presentations on the policy advocacy effort at the end of the semester. Presentations will be assessed both on the quality of the advocacy project and on the strength of the students’ presentation of each of the following elements:

a) the purpose of your advocacy effort,

b) a clear description of each of the specific policy advocacy activities you engaged in and justification for why you chose these specific forms of advocacy action,

c) a description of the target group for your advocacy, and other key participants in the effort,

d) an analysis of the degree to which you feel your efforts were effective and why,
e) knowing what you know now, an assessment of how you might have approached your advocacy differently to achieve better advocacy outcomes, and

f) an assessment of whether and how this experience impacted your feelings about engaging in policy advocacy.

*Students are expected to dress professionally for their presentations.*

**(DUE: 4/25)**

5) Engaging with Politics and Policy – 6 points (includes one extra credit point for the course)

2016 is a very exciting year in terms of politics and policy in the U.S. In addition to the Presidential Election coming up this Fall, the primaries (and caucuses, nationally) taking place this Spring offer many opportunities for students to increase their political engagement. For this assignment, students will participate in three political or policy-focused activities of their choice over the course of the semester.

Activities may be chosen from the following list:

- Attend a complete Policy Insider Series event at the GCSW
- Attend a complete event offered as part of the GCSW’s debate-related events
- Participate in a voter registrar training
- Actively register voters
- Watch or volunteer at a Presidential candidate debate
- Live-tweet a Presidential candidate debate or speech
- Watch election returns on Super Tuesday or another major primary election day
- Volunteer at a poll on primary election day (Super Tuesday, March 1)
- Attend a rally, speech, etc. organized by any candidate’s political campaign
- Attend a political fundraising event for any candidate or political organization
- Students may propose a political activity that is not on this list, but must receive prior approval from the instructor for it to count for this assignment.

Students are expected to submit proof of participation (e.g., a photo, a Twitter screenshot) and, for each event, a brief reflection (approximately ½ page) on your experiences watching or participating in each event as a social work student.

Students will earn up to 6 points for participating in and reflecting on 3 activities. Students will earn up to 4 points for participating in and reflecting on 2 activities. Students will earn up to 2 points for participating in and reflecting on 1 activity.

**(DUE: 5/9)**

5) Extra Credit – up to 2 points

The first segment of most class sessions (except Sessions 3, 13, and 14) will be devoted to discussion of current policy issues and events. Students may be awarded up to 1 Extra Credit
point for:
   a) bringing a newspaper or newsmagazine article or an audio or video clip (3 minutes or less in length only) relevant to current policy issues and events,
   b) providing your perspective on how the current policy issue may impact direct practice,
   c) linking the current policy issue to course content, and
   d) leading class discussion of the policy issue in the article/clip.

Each Extra Credit presentation and discussion will be limited to 10 minutes.

If you would like to present Extra Credit during a given class session, please notify the professor by email by 5 p.m. on the Friday before the class session during which you would like to present. So that I can have your audio/video clip up on the computer/projector, please include any clip you’d like to show in your email. If you share an article, please bring enough copies of the article for everyone in the class.

So that everyone who wants to has an opportunity to receive Extra Credit, students who have not yet shared an article or video clip at that point in the semester will have the first opportunity to share each week; otherwise, students will be selected to present on a first-come/first-serve basis.

Assignment Due Dates

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Course Due Dates</th>
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<td>Reading Responses</td>
<td>Seven dates of your choice throughout the semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library Exercise</td>
<td>2/15</td>
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<td>Critical Analysis 1: Social Problem Identification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Analysis 2: Comparative Policy Analysis – Part One</td>
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