



COURSE TITLE/SECTION: SOCW 7329/19059 Social Policy Advocacy

TIME: Monday 6:00pm-9:00pm

FACULTY: Ira Colby, DSW, LCSW
Professor of Social Work

OFFICE HOURS: Monday 12pm-12:45pm and
4:00pm-5:30pm

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I. Course

A. Catalog Description

Provides an understanding of political systems and teaches the skills to affect policy in the legislative as well as administrative arenas.

B. Purpose

This course provides students with an understanding of the political processes and systems that affect their practice. The course examines theory and skills effective in influencing, altering, and monitoring social policy.

II. Course Objectives

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

1. Apply analytical methods to understand the dimensions of power and decision-making at the community, state and national levels;
2. Develop strategies to enhance social and economic justice within organizational and political systems especially as they affect women, minorities of color, gay and lesbian persons, those most economically disadvantaged, as well as strategies to address social class;
3. Identify professional values and ethical positions within, as well as between systems, which may appear to be incompatible with political roles and strategies and develop skills to bridge these incompatibilities in order to affect change;
4. Identify and utilize methods and skills, which develop and sustain inter-organizational networks;
5. Demonstrate advocacy skills, such as testifying, lobbying, and providing staff support for public interest, constituency and/or grassroots community groups; Identify institutional and community practices that disempower, and develop strategies to challenge them;
6. Demonstrate how to share empowerment theory and practice with

constituencies who are unfamiliar or inclined to oppose such; and
7. Continue the development of the professional use-of-self.

III. Course Structure

Class formats will vary from session to session, depending on session content. Interactive lectures and discussion will be the primary format, requiring active participation and engagement. Class instruction may also include in-class exercises, guest speakers, peer-led discussions, and field trip(s). Students are expected to complete all readings as assigned and come to class prepared to discuss them.

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

IV. 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 or more 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.

V. Readings

This section should identify the course assignments, including written assignments, projects, and exams, as well as due dates. It is suggested that any stipulations regarding late submissions be included here.

1) Required Texts:

- Hofer, R. (2012). Advocacy practice for social justice. 2nd edition. Lyceum Press.
- CQ Researchers (2013). Debates in social policy. 2nd edition. Sage Publications.

- 2) **Required Newspaper:** Class members are required to read at least one daily newspaper with a focus on current social welfare issues that are impacted by advocacy efforts. 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 The Hill, 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. All of these papers can be accessed via the web. Each week, class will begin with students identifying at least one story of interest.
- 3) Other readings. Readings are required as noted in the syllabus, and as assigned during the course of the semester.
- 4) The Political Social Worker: Students are encouraged to sign up for the web based source, The Political Social Worker. Go to the following web site and sign up is found on the left side of the home page: <http://www.politicalsocialworker.org/>

VI. 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) **Advocacy Critique** – 40%

Students will be randomly assigned to a topical area identified in the text, *Issues for Debate in Social Policy*. The class will first vote to select 14 issues and students will be randomly assigned to the issue; this will take place in Session 1. There are two components for this assignment, a

written paper and a group presentation with class discussion. Each will be graded separately.

A.) Written Assignment – 20%

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) Summarize an advocacy effort that has occurred around the issue within the past two years;
- b) Describe:
 1. the target of the advocacy effort,
 2. the goals of the effort, and
 3. the strategies and tactics used
 4. critically assesses the appropriateness and effectiveness of the advocacy effort;
 5. discusses other strategies or tactics that may have been more effective
 6. critically assesses the appropriateness and effectiveness of the advocacy effort; and, discusses other strategies or tactics that may have been more effective

B.) Class Presentation – 20%

This assignment will include a class discussion with that mirrors a presentation to an external group such as a Legislative Committee, an organization's board of directors, etc.. The presentation may include any multi-media and/or handouts. The presentation should include a minimum of 10 minutes for class discussion; the combined presentation *and* discussion that is limited to 30 minutes. Each group is to prepare a reading and information brief for class members.

3) Advocacy Strategy and Implementation – 50%

An important skill for professional social workers is the ability to effectively engage in policy advocacy. Over the course of the semester, each student will develop and implement an advocacy project around a policy issue of professional or personal interest that is being considered by the Texas State Legislature. Students are encouraged to complete this project in pairs; however, individual projects are permitted.

The assignment requires an "advocacy product" from the following list:

- a) Talking points to be used in advocating your position with a "Fact sheet" for a lawmaker;
- b) Op-ed submitted to a newspaper;

- c) Testimony for an elected or appointed body;
- d) Letter to the editor;
- e) Letters (a minimum of three letters) to local, state, or national legislator;
- f) Website, accompanied by dissemination plan;
- g) Coordination and implementation of a plan for a lobby day; or
- h) Other advocacy tools, if approved by course professor.

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 describe briefly the broad policy issue or problem addressed in this project and why there is a need for change regarding this issue;
- b) Make a clear statement of the specific policy change sought and how this change will impact practice, clients' lives, and social and economic justice;
- c) Justify the specific long-term, intermediate, and short-term goals hoped to be achieved through this advocacy project;
- d) Specify (including names, titles) the individuals, groups, organizations, etc. with authority over the issue that the advocacy project seeks to influence and explain why these are the appropriate individuals, groups, organizations, etc..
- e) describe *and justify* each strategy and tactic used; and
- f) Identify 3 advocacy tactics you will implement this semester, briefly describe how you plan to implement each tactic, and discuss why you think each tactic is appropriate for this advocacy effort.

VII. Evaluation and Grading

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

X. 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.

XI. Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Session 1. January 26	Course Overview
	Assignment: Class selects 13 topics for semester discussion; 18 topics are listed in the text, <i>Issues for Debate in Social Policy</i> . Students will be arbitrarily assigned to a topic and topic will be randomly assigned a presentation date beginning.
Session 2. February 2	Notify Instructor of the newspaper to be read throughout the semester
	<i>Advocacy and Social Work</i> Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hoefler, chps 1, 2, 10• NASW - http://socialworkers.org/pressroom/features/issue/advocacy.asp• NASW Code of Ethics - http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/Code/code.asp• IASSW and IFSW Global Standards - http://ifsw.org/policies/global-standards/• Social works in the US Congress, 2013 - http://socialworkers.org/pace/swcongress2013.pdf
Session 3. February 9	<i>Developing an advocacy agenda: how to begin</i> Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hoefler, chp 3
Session 4. February 16	<i>Understanding the Issue</i> Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hoefler, chp 4
Session 5. February 23	<i>Skills: Planning, Education, Negotiation, and Persuasion</i> Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hoefler, chps. 5, 6
Session 6. March 2	<i>Presentation Information: From Briefs to Power Points</i> Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hoefler, chp 7
Session 7. March 9	<i>Strategies and tactics: Electoral Politics</i> Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Political Social Workers - http://www.politicalsocialworker.org/

- NASW PACE - <http://socialworkers.org/pace/default.asp>

March 16

Spring Break – No Class

Session 8. March 23

Strategies and tactics: Influencing legislation and regulation
Readings

- Texas NASW State Legislative Agenda - http://www.naswtx.org/?page=PubPol_LegAgenda
- One Voice Coalition Legislative Priorities - <http://onevoicetexas.org/84thlegislaturepolicypriorities.html>
- Mental Health Association of Greater Houston - <http://www.mhahouston.org/mha-advocacy/>

Session 9. March 30

Strategies and tactics: Influencing the NGO
Readings

- Responsibilities of a Board
 - http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/NAMI_Center_for_Excellence/Tools_for_Excellence/TenBasicResponsibilitiesofNonprofitBoards.pdf
 - <http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/resources/resources-topic/boards-governance/roles-and-responsibilities-nonprofit-boards>
- Miller-Millesen, Understanding the Behavior of Nonprofit Boards of Directors: A Theory-Based Approach - <http://nvs.sagepub.com/content/32/4/521.full.pdf+html>

Session 10. April 6

Strategies and tactics: Evaluation and assessment
Readings

- Hoefler, chps. 8, 9

Session 11. April 13

Presentations

Session 12. April 20

Presentations

Session 13. April 27

Presentations

Session 14. May 4

Summary and Overview