1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine social policies, problems, and trends in social programs and services for older people. It will focus major attention on the strengths and limitations of existing policies and programs related to health, mental health, income maintenance, income deficiency, dependent care, housing, employment and unemployment, and institutional and residential care. This course will provide a framework for an analysis of the services provided to older people. This analysis will include the adequacy with which needs are met in various subgroups of the elderly population and across core diversity dimensions (including ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation). It will also include proposals for change in policies, programs and services. Programs will be compared in terms of access to benefits and services provided to older people.

2. COURSE CONTENT

This course will familiarize students with social policies and programs for meeting the rapidly growing needs of the older population in our society. Policies, programs, and services for the elderly population will be examined from historical, observational, and analytical perspectives. This course will increase the student’s awareness of programs and services provided through the Older Americans Act, the Social Security Act, and as a consequence of public and community initiatives. Students will be exposed to content areas that will enable them to understand aging programs dealing with social services, health care, housing, and other elements of community and institutional long-term care systems.

3. COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

1. Describe the evolution and organization of policies and services for older people in the
context of the problems that give rise to the need for such policies and services.

2. Critique the strengths and weaknesses of the U.S. social service delivery system for older people.

3. Identify the problems facing the development of services for older people and suggest approaches to address these challenges.

4. Identify criteria for assessing the success of programs for older people.

5. Critically evaluate alternative policies and services for older people with a special emphasis on similarities and differences related to human diversity and dynamics of oppression and privilege.

6. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to policies and services for elderly people.

7. Use a political economy framework to critically evaluate policies and services provided to older people in terms of such issues as privilege, oppression, diversity and social justice.

4. COURSE DESIGN

This course takes a learner-center approach with the belief that learning experiences have the greatest impact when they are relevant to the personal world of the learner. This belief is implemented through several ways. First, for many class sessions, homework that asks students to link real people with policy, programs and services has been assigned. Students’ experience of doing the homework will be the basis of class discussion on the topic of the day. So please come to class to prepare sharing your experience. Second, we will have five debates throughout the course. As a class, you select aging policy issues of your interest to debate. Each student selects own teammates and the team works together to develop debate strategies. All class members have the opportunities to be judges and give final decision. Third, you select topics/issues of your concerns for the two written assignments—fact checking and policy brief. If you so desire, you can write an Op-Ed essay or a letter to the Editor about your investigation. Bonus points will be given to those who choose to do so.

Required readings assigned for each session include two types. One aims to provide background information about specific aging policy, programs and services. Another is more analytical which aims to provide you with alternative perspectives and new ideas to think about a topic or an issue. Some readings may take time to digest while others are easy read. We will integrate the readings in class discussion. I invite you to give feedback about the readings (via CTools) and suggest good reading materials on the topic (which will benefit the next cohort of students).

In sum, this course involves your active participation in and out of the classroom. For most class sessions, the instructor will give brief lectures laying out key issues related to the topic. Guest speakers will be invited to deliver lectures on their expertise. Class discussion will be a main activity in the classroom. So be ready to talk, listen and challenge each other including the instructor.
5. RELATIONSHIP OF THE COURSE TO CURRICULAR THEMES

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed through analysis of differences in needs among subgroups of the elderly population within the U.S. society and the differential application and impact of policies and services.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** will be addressed by considering issues such as the distribution of social security and other benefits, varying standards for assessing the need for intervention (e.g., protective services and guardianship), and differing outcomes for behavior considered harmful to self or others.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be addressed by considering the spectrum of policies and services ranging from promotion and prevention (e.g., pre-retirement programs and in-home services) to treatment and rehabilitation (e.g., income support for those with inadequate resources and nursing homes).

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research** will be addressed by the inclusion of theoretical frameworks for understanding social roles, social stratification, and societal functioning among older people. The findings of research studies and evidence based intervention relevant to the design and evaluation of policies and services for older adults will also be included.

6. RELATIONSHIP OF THE COURSE TO SOCIAL WORK ETHICS AND VALUES

This course will address social work values and ethics in terms of the extent to which policies and services adequately meet the needs of older people. Special emphasis will be given to ethics and values concerning policies and services that provide older people with autonomy.

**Intensive Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice (PODS)**

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students develop a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self knowledge and self awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

**Intensive focus content** for this course includes social justice, oppression, and power relationships that have implications for social policies and services for elderly people. The “political economy of aging” paradigm, a social policy paradigm by Dr. Carol Estes and colleagues, is used to critically analyze policies and services provided to older people. The political economy of aging paradigm addresses the “interlocking systems of oppression’ of race, class, gender, and aging,” thereby creating an excellent model for understanding oppression, privilege, and proposals for change. These concepts will also be addressed through a series of class discussions about common situations in aging policy practice where PODS issues are prominent in the development and application of public policy.
7. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Academic Conduct and Integrity

Please see the Student Code of Academic and Professional Conduct in the Student Guide to the Master's in Social Work Degree Program (http://www.ssw.umich.edu/studentGuide/2010/) for a discussion of student responsibilities for academic conduct and integrity. In particular, please pay attention to issues related to plagiarism. Students who are found responsible for academic misconduct are subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the School of Social Work, revocation of degree, or any other sanction deemed appropriate to address the violation.

B. Attendance, Participation and Good Citizenship

Students are expected to attend, arrive on time and stay throughout all class sessions; participate actively in all class activities; and take initiative to create and promote a good learning environment (physically, psychologically and socially). If you have good reasons to miss a class, please notify your instructor at your earliest convenience. Missing more than two class sessions may result in points deducted from final grade. In consideration of your classmates, please turn off cell phones, pagers, and all other potentially distracting devices during class. If you are on call, please set your pager to vibrate. Likewise, use of laptop computers should be kept to the minimum so that we can all focus on what’s happening in the classroom. Good attendance and citizenship will boost up your final grade particularly when it is at the margin of two possible grades.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you need accommodation for a disability or other special need, please let the instructor know as early as possible so that we can work out the necessary arrangements. Also note that Office of Student Services at the SSW offers support to students with disabilities, as well as students with other issues such as emotional, health, family, and financial problems.

Religious Observances

Please notify me if religious observances conflict with class or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

C. Assignments (please submit to the instructor a hard copy of all written assignments except homework which should be put in your dropbox in Ctools.)

(1) Policy Brief (37% of final grade) Due: December 10

The date is January 2011 and you have just started to work as a policy analyst (for a legislative or administrative decision maker in city, state, or federal government, or an advocacy group for older persons, or a think tank). Your first assignment is to draft a policy brief about a social problem relevant to older adults. Please select a problem of your concern, and write a paper (about 1800-2000 words) that includes (a) definition of the
problem, (b) major factors that led to this problem and its consequences for individuals, groups, and the society, (c) critical evaluation of relevant policies intended to address the problem, (d) the politics involved (e.g., in framing the problem), and (e) policy options and your recommendations with justification. There should be a balance of coverage in terms of understanding the issue and proposing alternatives. The eightfold path framework may be a useful guide for your analysis. A proposal (1-2 pages) of the policy brief should be submitted to the instructor on November 12. The proposal should include a statement of the problem and a brief background about the impact of the problem and limitations of existing policy, programs and services.

(2) Fact or Fiction?  (25%) Due: November 5

The 2010 Congressional election is coming (November 2). Political candidates, reporters, and other media personnel will be busy making speeches and comments. Rather than simply accepting the presented “facts,” you know it is important to do fact checking. You choose a source (e.g., speech and debate of political candidates, television news show, radio talk show, newspaper article or column, internet blog) and specific facts (related to policy, programs or services that affect older adults or their caregivers) to check. An essay (about 1000 words) reporting your findings should include (a) the context that leads to your investigation, (b) the specific ‘fact’ that you check, (c) your findings, (d) implications of the ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ (e.g., how the ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ may differ in the understanding of the problem or implications for policy.) Please give the instructor a one-page proposal by October 22.

**Bonus points:** For both policy brief and fact checking assignments, you can choose to send an Op-Ed essay or a Letter to the Editor of a newspaper. If the essay or letter is published prior to the end of the semester, you’ll receive up to three extra points.

(3) Debate (20%)

Each of you will be in a debate team and there will be five in-class debates throughout the semester. For details about the topics and rules, please see a separate handout.

(4) Homework (18%)

A total of six homework are assigned and their respective due date is noted on the course schedule. It is important that you complete the homework according to schedule because class discussion will be based on your experience of doing the homework. Each homework could earn you three points. The award of points will be based on (a) your sharing of experience and insight in the classroom and (b) your written materials submitted to the instructor. Your written homework should be in your **dropbox in Ctools** before the correspondent session. Late submission is not accepted in general except under special circumstances.
Writing Expectations

Written assignments should clearly communicate the student’s knowledge and thought, and be easily understood. A concise writing style that directly makes points and reflects a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter is preferred.

Students are required to use appropriate referencing on the policy brief and fact checking assignments. APA style is preferred but you can use other styles. The grading criteria for these two written assignments include: (1) completeness, thoroughness and timely submission, (2) organization and clarity, (3) documentation and referencing, and (4) critical thinking, originality and creativity.

D. Grading

Grades will be determined by adding the scores from all assignments which then is converted into a letter grade using the following scale:

A+ = 101%+; A = 100% - 96%; A-= 95% - 91%
B+ = 90% - 86%; B = 85% - 83%; B-= 82% - 80%
C+ = 79% - 76%; C = 75% - 73%; C-= 72% - 70%
< 69 No Credit

8. REQUIRED TEXT AND ARTICLES


Required articles are available on our course website in CTools.

Other readings, in addition to those listed in this syllabus, may be assigned. They will be announced and posted on CTools prior to the corresponding class session.
9. COURSE CALENDAR AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

This schedule is preliminary; any changes will be announced in class and on CTools.

Week 1 September 10: Introduction

- Overview of syllabus
- Challenges to aging policy
- The eightfold path


Week 2 September 17: Analytical Framework, Older American Act and Aging Networks

- The political economy of aging framework
- Role and challenges of the aging networks


*To read more about the Older American Act, go to the website of Administration on Aging: http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/OAA/index.aspx

Homework 1 due: Summarize the eightfold path framework, and comment on its utility (1-2 pages).

Week 3 September 24: Income Support

- Income security in old age
Inequality among older persons


**Homework 2 due:** Calculate your parents’ retirement income.
- Use one of the following calculators to determine your parents’ retirement income. What factors contribute to the calculation? How do the benefits differ between your mother and father? Please submit a one-page report of your findings.

a. Center for Economic Policy Research
   [http://www.cepr.net/calculators/ss/calculator.html](http://www.cepr.net/calculators/ss/calculator.html)

b. AARP Retirement Calculator

c. Social Security Administration
   [http://www.ssa.gov/planners/calculators.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/planners/calculators.htm)

d. Urban Institute: Income and Benefits Policy Center
   [http://www.urban.org/content/PolicyCenters/Income_Benefits/Overview](http://www.urban.org/content/PolicyCenters/Income_Benefits/Overview)

e. Center for Budget and Policy Priorities
   [http://www.workingamerica.org/issues/socialsecurity/calculator.htm](http://www.workingamerica.org/issues/socialsecurity/calculator.htm)

**Week 4 October 1: Future of Social Security**

- ‘Fixing’ social security
- Privatization


**Homework 3 due:** Social Security Game (American Academy of Actuaries)

- American public’s confidence in Social Security is tanking. Actuaries say that unless it’s fixed, it won’t be able to pay full benefits after 2040. Many solutions have been proposed. The Academy of Actuaries has designed a game which asks you to ‘fix’ social security. Pl. go to http://www.actuary.org/socialsecurity/game.html to play the game, and write a one-page (300-400 words) essay to reflect your experience including justifications for your votes.

**Week 5 October 8: Medicare**

- Medicare and changes introduced by the health care reform
- Equity, justice, and sustainability


**Homework 4 due:** One of your elderly relatives (or elderly clients) asks you for assistance in determining if she is eligible for Medicare, and if so, (1) how he/she goes about applying for it, (2) which health and drug plan he/she should use, (3) whether he/she should purchase Medigap. This website should be helpful http://www.medicare.gov/. Write a one-page (300-400 words) summary of your advice.
**Week 6 October 15: Medicaid**

- Medicaid and long-term care
- Health rationing

Rudowitz, R. (2010). Health reform: how will Medicaid change (a video tutorial)
http://www.kaiseredu.org/tutorials/medicaid-and-health-reform/player.html


**Week 7 October 22: Long-Term Care—Policy and Challenges**

- Cost of long-term care
- Paying for LTC
- The CLASS Act
- Long-term care workforce

Kathryn G. Allen (2005). Long-Term Care financing: Growing demand and cost of services are straining federal and state budgets. Testimony before the Subcommittee on Health, Committee on Energy and Commerce, House of Representatives


**Homework 5 due:** Long-term care planning for yourself (or someone you know well). Most people do not plan for long-term care. Why? Probably many reasons including a tendency to avoid thinking about being dependent on others for daily life activities. Please use the following tool to find out your long-term care profile and write a one-page essay (300 words) to report your experience.
http://www.medicare.gov/LTCPlanning/Include/DataSection/Questions/SearchCriteria.asp?version=default&browser=IE%7C8%7CWinXP&language=English&defaultstatus=0&pagemlist=Home
**Week 8 October 29: LTC—Home and Community-Based Services**

- “Traditional” and “innovative” HCBS
- Rebalancing LTC system
- Supporting informal caregivers


Grabowski, D., Cadigan, R., Miller, E. et al. (2010). Supporting Home and Community-Based Care: Views of long-term care specialists. *Medical Care Research and Review*. Supplement to 67(4) 82S–101S.

**Week 9 November 5: LTC—Residential Services**

- Institutional care—problems and innovations
- Racial disparity


**Week 10 November 12: Employment, Life-long Learning and Senior Center**


AARP International.


Week 11 Nov. 19: No Class (Prof. Li out of town)

Week 12 Nov. 26: No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 13 Dec 3: Housing & Transportation

- Housing and transportation needs
- Strategies to meet the needs

Homework 6 due (option A): Identify an elderly person (an elderly relative, neighbor or client) with a housing need (e.g., physical or financial difficulties to maintain his/her house). Please help her find out what options he/she has and what services she can utilize. Recommend to her one or two options for serious consideration. What factors do you consider when making the recommendation? Write a one-page essay (300-400 words) to report your effort.

OR

Homework 6 due (option B): Identify an elderly person (an elderly relative, neighbor or client) with a transportation need (e.g., don’t want to drive anymore after a minor accident). Please help her find out what options he/she has, what services are available, and how to go about to use the services. Write a one-page essay (300-400 words) to report your effort and assess the extent to which existing programs and services meet his/her transportation need.


AARP Public Policy Institute (2010). Strategies to meet the housing needs of older adults.


**Week 14 December 10: Mental Health and Nutrition**

- Mental health policy, programs and regulation
- Nutrition issues and programs
- Senior centers—role and future


Lee et al. (2010). Food insecurity, food and nutrition programs, and aging: Experiences from Georgia. *J. of Nutrition for the Elderly*, 29, 116-149.