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, long-term care, housing, transportation, nutrition, employment, learning and civic engagement. 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 race/ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, culture, marital status, national origin, religion/spirituality, and family structure). 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 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. Second, we will have four debates throughout the course. I have identified several topics currently under fierce debate at the national stage for this purpose. You’ll form debate teams and be randomly assigned a position. All class members have an opportunity to be judges and decide the outcome of the debate. Third, you select issues of your concerns for the two written assignments—input to the reauthorization of the Older American Act and a letter to lawmakers.

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

   In sum, your active participation is needed in this class. For most class sessions, the instructor will give brief lectures laying out key issues related to the topic. Class discussion will be a main activity in the classroom. So be ready to talk, listen and challenge each other.

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 (5%)

Students are expected to attend, arrive on time and stay throughout all class sessions; participate actively in all class activities; and take initiation to create and promote a good learning environment. If you have to miss a class, please notify your instructor at your earliest convenience. Missing more than one class session may result in points deducted from your 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.

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 (all written assignments should be submitted via your Drop Box in Ctools)

(1) Write a letter to lawmakers or Editors of local newspapers (20%)—Due November 18

At a time when governments at all levels are wrestling with issues of budget reduction, the need of older persons may be put aside. Some advocacy groups have sent out alarms that programs and services for older adults are at risk of being cut (e.g., National Association of Area Agencies of Aging: [http://www.n4a.org/files/advocacy/campaigns/Budget_Primer_Super_Committee_8_29_11](http://www.n4a.org/files/advocacy/campaigns/Budget_Primer_Super_Committee_8_29_11); the National Council of Aging: www.ncoa.org/public-policy/federal-funding-for-senior -programs. In Michigan, the Area Agency on Aging 1B has put out their response to Governor Synder’s proposed budget: www. aaa1b.com/wp=--content/uploads/2010/08/2012)

As someone who concerns about the well-being of older persons, you write a letter to lawmakers at federal, state or local levels to urge them to protect a program or meet an urgent need of older adults (or a subgroup of older persons) in Michigan. While the letter has to be succinct (not to exceed 600 words), it should define the problem clearly and include your analysis and recommendations. Use facts and evidence to support your arguments (some supporting evidence could be put in the Appendix which does not count
towards the 2-page limit). Real person stories, if use appropriately, could help to illustrate your points. The lawmakers you should correspond with depend on the issue you identify and your residence (make sure you are a constituent of the lawmaker). Go to this website for contact information of lawmakers in Michigan (http://www.aaa1b.com/advocacy/contact-your-lawmaker/). You can also use this link to find lawmakers (http://www.usa.gov/Agencies.shtml). You have to identify yourself (your name and address) in the letter. An alternative of writing to lawmakers is to write an Op-Ed to a local newspaper.

(2) Debate (20%)

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

(3) Five Homework Assignments (25%)

Homework is given for most weeks. Three are required for all students (the ones due on Sept 16, Sept 30 and Dec. 9), each of them could earn you 5 points (total=15 points). You can choose (or may be randomly assigned) the other two homework (@ 10 points) from the rest given. All homework should be submitted on its due date and before the corresponding class begins (early or late submission will not be accepted). Your experience of and insights from doing the homework will be the basis of class discussion. The award of points will be based on the quality of your report, insights and questions; and your willingness to share in the classroom. Each report should be about 400-500 words.

(4) Respond to OAA reauthorization (30%)--Due December 2

This assignment consists of two parts and could be a collaboration of two students.

(a) Write an essay (about 1000-1200 words) about your idea(s) for OAA reauthorization (20%). You could focus on one or more issues (e.g., transportation, nutrition, mental health, long-term care, civic engagement, health promotion, ethnic or sexual minority elders, workforce development, access to services, quality of services, cost of services etc.) that you think to be most important to address in the future. Explain why it is (they are) important, then provide recommendations about actions that can be taken and rationale for your suggestions. Use facts and evidence to support your arguments. Many advocacy groups have their versions of recommendations on line which you could read to stimulate ideas. But it is important that you and your partner come up with your own ideas through research and discussion.

(b) Submit your input regarding OAA reauthorization online (10%) via this website (http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/OAA/Reauthorization/index.aspx). You may have to condense your essay when submitting the input. Print a copy of your submission to the instructor for record.
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 and critical thinking is preferred. Students are required to use appropriate referencing. APA style is a good choice but you can use other styles. All assignments should be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font size and proofread before submission via CTools.

D. Grading

Grades will be determined by adding the scores from all assignments which then are 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 9:  Introduction**
- Overview of syllabus
- Challenges to aging policy
- Policy analysis framework


**Week 2 September 16: Theoretical Perspectives, The Older American Act and Aging Networks**
- The political economy of aging perspective
- Role and challenges of the aging networks
- Reauthorization of the OAA


Historical evolution of program for older Americans. [http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/OAA/index.aspx](http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/OAA/index.aspx) (feel free to browse the website to learn more about the OAA, reauthorization and aging network)


*Homework 1 due:* Summarize and critique the eightfold path framework. (Required for all students.)
Week 3 September 23: Income Maintenance

- Income security in old age
- Inequality among older persons
- Employment programs


The Center for Adult and Experiential Learning (2011). Developing the workforce as it matures: Emerging models and lessons for the mid-point of the aging worker initiative.

Homework 2 due: Interview one or more adults (age 50+) who have difficulties to maintain a decent standard of living or feel anxious about their financial situation. Try to understand their concerns and how they come to this point. Link the readings to the problem they are facing and identify potential avenues for policy intervention based on the readings and your interviews.

Week 4 September 30: Future of Social Security (Debate I)

- ‘Fixing’ social security
- Privatization


*Homework 3 due: Social Security Game (Required for all students.)

American public’s confidence in Social Security has been tanking for some time. Recent debates on budget deficit reduction only increase people’s feelings of uncertainty. 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. Go to http://www.actuary.org/socialsecurity/game.html to play the game. Please submit to the instructor your votes with justifications and your reflection (what you have learned, what insight you gain, what questions you have) after playing this game.

Week 5 October 7: Medicare (Debate II)

- Medicare
- The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
- 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 and what preparation (e.g., documents) is needed, (2) which health and drug plan he/she should use, (3) whether he/she should join the Medicare Advantage Plan; if so, which plan? (4) should he/she have Medicap? This website http://www.medicare.gov/ should be very helpful. Other non-government websites could be useful as well (e.g., PlanPrescriber http://www.planprescriber.com/medicare-advantage/). Write a summary of your advice and the reasons. Also include a reflection of your learning points and insights from this homework.
Week 6 October 14: Medicaid (Debate III)

- Medicaid
- Health reform and Medicaid
- Dual eligible
- Mental health


The Kaiser Family Foundation (2011). Medicaid policy options for meeting the needs of adults with mental illness under the Affordable Care Act.

Homework 5 due: Interview one or more providers of mental health services to older adults and understand their perspectives about challenges and obstacles to help older adults with mental health problems. Identify challenges and obstacles that are at the policy, program or service level and discuss the extent to which they could be addressed by the Affordable Care Act.

Week 7 October 21: Long-Term Care—Policy and Challenges (Debate IV)

- Cost of long-term care
- How to pay 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 6 due: Long-term care planning for yourself (or your parent).**

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 ([http://www.medicare.gov/LTCPlanning/Include/DataSection/Questions/SearchCriteria.asp?version=default&browser=IE%7C8%7CWinXP&language=English&defaultstatus=0&pagemlist=Home](http://www.medicare.gov/LTCPlanning/Include/DataSection/Questions/SearchCriteria.asp?version=default&browser=IE%7C8%7CWinXP&language=English&defaultstatus=0&pagemlist=Home)).

Then consider whether you would participate in the program offered by the CLASS Act (why and why not). Write a short essay recording your experience and reflecting the knowledge, insights and questions you developed through this homework.

**Week 8 October 28: LTC—Home and Community-Based LTC**

- A cross-national perspective on financing LTC
- Rebalancing LTC system
- Supporting informal caregivers


**Homework 7 due:** Write a study log of readings in weeks 7 and 8. A study log is a synthesis of the readings (two or more) centering on a major theme.

**Week 9  November 4: LTC—Residential Services**

- Institutional care—problems and innovations
- Racial disparity


**Homework 8 due:** Interview one or more persons who have direct experience with nursing home services (e.g., nursing home residents and their family, nursing home staff at different levels, nursing home inspector, or long-term care ombudsman). Try to understand their experience/perspective regarding the quality of nursing home services (e.g., how they evaluate the service, what they perceive as contributors to the good/bad service, what they hope to change). Write an essay that integrates one or more readings and your interview, and reflects what you have learned through this homework.

**Week 10  Nov. 11:  Aging in Place**

- Housing
- Transportation
- Neighborhood


Pynoos, J. & Cicero, C. (2009). New approaches to housing and aging in place. Public Policy and
Aging Report, v.19(1).


Planning healthy communities for all ages: Community design, neighborhood change, and impact on older adults. Public Policy and Aging Report, 20(3).

**Week 11  Nov. 18: Nutrition and Senior Center**

- Nutrition issues and programs
- Senior centers—role and future


**Week 12  Nov. 25: No Class (Thanksgiving Break)**

**Week 13  Dec. 2: Life-long Learning and Civic Engagement**


information about LiLA)

Week 14 Dec. 9: Elder Justice and Emergency Assistance

- Elder abuse
- Elder Justice Act
- Ombudsman program
- Legal assistance
- Disaster preparedness and emergency assistance


CDC’s Disaster Planning Goal: Protect Vulnerable Older Adults. CDC Health Aging Program.

Homework 9 due: Write a brief summary and analysis of the activities you have been involved with in this class. Discuss the following: (Required for all students.)
What do you think you have learned in this course?
How is what you learned in this course related to other courses you have taken and your internship?
What knowledge and skills have you developed in this course that you might use in your future practice?