SW 823: Comparative Cross National Analyses of Social Service Systems

Fall 2012
Mondays, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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Course Description

This course focuses on exploring and applying a structure for the comparative cross-national study of social services. It is intended to provide a common basis for developing comparisons and providing students with the opportunity to explore how a particular area of social services has developed and been implemented in a country of their choosing. The course will start with an exploration of the parameters for understanding and comparing national approaches to social services. These parameters include, but are not limited to, the resources/wealth of a country, the role of national/local government, cross-national influences, and the relevant religious and societal values in a country. In developing comparative perspectives on the realities of social service provision, emphasis will be placed on understanding challenges of implementation and gaps between policies and practice. Examples of social service areas that students will be encouraged to pursue include income security, protecting vulnerable populations, criminal justice, child care/adoption, health care, disability policy, and employment/labor rights.

Course Objectives

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

1. Describe the elements of social service systems and how social, economic, and political factors impact their development in nations.
2. Identify and describe the salient features that influence the operations of social service systems.
3. Describe and critically analyze an area of social service within its national context.

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes

1. Multiculturalism and Diversity. This course will seek to identify how the cultural or experiential situation of a nation impacts development and implementation of social welfare/social service policies and practices.
2. Social Justice and Social Change. The course critically analyzes how the social service systems reflect and impact social justice and social change within a country, with an emphasis on stages of development, resource availability, historical experience, ideology, and cultural traditions.
3. *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation.* The course will examine how promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation are a part of the social services in different countries.

4. *Behavioral and Social Science Research.* Analytic frameworks drawn from behavioral and social science literature and research are a part of the development and application of the comparative framework.

**Student Support Services**

**Writing Assistance.** The University of Michigan offers a variety of resources for assisting students in professional and academic writing. The Sweetland Writing Center is one such resource. For help with your paper, please free to consult them for writing support. They can help you develop your argument, improve your paper organization, correct grammar mistakes, and craft effective prose. SWC is located at 1310 North Quad (corner of W. Washington and State St.) You can register with them on line and schedule an appointment:

Website: [http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/)

Tutoring and writing assistance for social work courses is also available in Career Services. Contact micwoods@umich.edu

Another resource for students for whom English is not their first language is the English Language Institute: [http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli)

**Students with Disabilities.** The School of Social Work has policies and services to provide equitable educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities in all programs and activities. Students with disabilities who require academic adjustments are encouraged to contact their instructors at the beginning of the semester to discuss their specific needs.

To find out more about services, register for services, or volunteer as a reader, note taker, or tutor, contact the University’s Services for Students with Disabilities, G664 Haven Hall, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1045, 734-763-3000. Hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Students with disabilities may also contact Nyshourn Price-Reed, LMSW (ndp@umich.edu) or Lauren Davis, LLMSW (laurdavi@umich.edu) at the School of Social Work, 734-936-0961.

**Health and wellness services.** Health and wellness situations or circumstances may impede student success within the program. Students should feel free to contact the School’s Health and Wellness Advocates, Lauren Davis or Nyshourn Price-Reed, listed above.

**Course Requirements**

The following are course requirements. If students have special needs or circumstances that would interfere with their ability to complete these requirements, they should contact the instructor so that suitable accommodations can be arranged.
Class attendance and preparation

Students are expected to attend and to be prepared to take part in each class session. Attendance is important to keep up with course work. It is the student’s responsibility to get materials, handouts, or class notes from one of your classmates if you are not in class. Late arrival to class is disruptive and should be avoided.

Regular attention to news sources

Examples of social policy issues in the United States and other countries are constantly coming up in the news. The best way to sharpen your understanding of current policy issues is to be a critical consumer of news. The traditional way to keep current on policy issues is to regularly read a major national newspaper. The New York Times and Wall Street Journal, which both have a strong web-presence (and hard-copy delivery locally) are excellent sources. Their news accounts are generally considered reliable, although their editorial or opinion pieces reflect a particular orientation. The online versions of these papers, and others, such as the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times, provide good sources of traditional news coverage.

Broadcast news sources, such as daily news shows and specials, such as Washington Week in Review, Meet the Press, and Nightline, provide another useful source of information. The News Hour on Public Television, which covers top national stories, is an excellent weekday source of more in-depth discussion of emerging policy issues.

The proliferation of cable news/commentary, as well as the overwhelming number of online news shows, news aggregators, and blogs, reinforces the importance critically assessing sources.

Responsibility for leading class discussion of a reading

During the semester, each student will be responsible for selecting one of the assigned readings and leading the discussion about that reading. Students will be expected to bring out the key points raised in the reading and the implications for the course content. Information will be provided by the instructor to help students select the readings for which they will be responsible.

Written Assignments

1. Personal encounter with the social welfare/social service system

   (Due: Friday, September 21)

   Think about how a social welfare program or policy has impacted you, your family, or someone else with whom you are close. Submit a one-two page summary of the issue, how it affected the individual/family, and what issues in the policy seem to reflect its national context. If you would not like this example discussed in the class, please let me know
2. Social welfare profile of a target country
   (Due: Monday, October 29)
   Each student will select a country for study and prepare a 5-10 page paper
describing the characteristics of that country, highlighting factors that are most
relevant for understanding their overall social services/social welfare situation,
such as resources/level of development, socio-cultural background (e.g., history,
religion, traditions, and external relations), demographics/heterogeneity, and
ideology).

3. Examining a social welfare or social service area within the target country.
   (Due: Monday, December 10)
   Delving deeper into the target country, each student will define a social service or
social welfare area for further exploration. For example, the focus could be
income maintenance programs, services for children/elderly, physical or
behavioral health interventions, work-related programs, or other areas of the
student’s interest. The paper will focus on why this is an important issue for that
country, what materials/resources appear to be available for studying this topic in
the target country, and what other information would be needed to undertake this
analysis. Note that the extent to which this paper actually analyzes the
program/policy area will depend upon available information. To the extent that
this information is unavailable, the paper should address the kinds of information
that is needed and how such an analysis would be undertaken.

General expectations for written work

Written work will be evaluated in relation to how well it addresses the topic and the clarity of
presentation. It is important to re-read work before turning it in. If possible, you should have
someone who is unfamiliar with your subject read your paper before you submit it. Ask them to
read for clarity of your writing, if you omitted a word or phrase, or if you used the wrong word.
Spell checkers and grammar checkers are useful, but not as reliable as a human reader.

Plagiarism – presenting another’s words or ideas as your own – is a serious violation of academic
integrity and can be grounds for failure on an assignment and other disciplinary action as
described under the School’s policies on academic misconduct. More information about the
School’s policy can be found at on the website:


Grading

The criteria used for each letter grade are:

A Demonstration of a level of critical analysis, creativity and/or complexity in
completion of the assignment that clearly exceeds expectations for the assignment
or the course

B Mastery of subject content at level of expected competency at the graduate level –
fully meeting course expectations
C Demonstrates some understanding of subject content, but improvement is needed to have mastery of the subject matter

E Student does not demonstrate sufficient understanding of course material to receive course credit

A plus (+) or minus (-) designation is used to indicate gradations above or below the level indicated by the grade.

All grading has a subjective element. If, after you read my feedback, you have questions about your grade, please feel free to see me about them.

All assignments are due on the date specified. If you have schedule conflicts with one of the due dates, please see me ahead of time. If you have any special needs with respect to religious observances, health, disability, or other concerns that may affect your fulfillment of any course requirements, please see me individually.

The final grade for the class will be determined based on the following:

- Class preparation, participation, leading discussion: 30%
- Social welfare profile of a target country: 30%
- Examining a social welfare or social service area within the target country: 40%

Course Materials

There is no required text. The readings will be available through Ctools. In addition, Internet-based and other class resources may be suggested.

A word of caution about ideological orientation/biases in Internet sources—particularly regard to cross-national policy analysis. It is best to use peer-reviewed materials (e.g., journal articles) or original historical materials for primary source material for your research. Government web sites may also be used as primary sources. If you use research published by research institutions (“think tanks”), try to balance their analyses with reports from other institutions with different political or ideological perspectives. When citing a website, be sure to fully spell out the website address (URL) and the download date so that the reader can find the page you used.

Cartoon by Peter Steiner, New Yorker, July 5, 1993
Course Outline

Session 1--Sept. 10  Introduction to course and initial discussion of social policy frameworks

Readings:

Session 2--Sept. 17  Individual meetings with students
(no class session because of Rosh Hashanah holiday)

Session 3 & 4--Sept. 24 and Oct. 1  What do we mean by “welfare state” and “social service systems”—thinking about targets for programs, policy mechanisms, and ways at looking at country systems

Readings:

Conceptualizing social welfare systems (for session #3)

National welfare systems—a glance (for session #3)
OECD. (2011). Factbook
Income inequality
Poverty rates and gaps

Welfare systems and larger governance issues (for session #4)
Hayek, F. (1945). The Road to Serfdom (condensed version, written for Readers Digest and approved by the F. Hayek). This version also includes an illustrated version, which was distributed by General Motors Corporation.


**Assignment: Personal encounter with a social policy or social program**

Think about how a social welfare program or policy has impacted you, your family, or someone else with whom you are close. Submit a one-two page summary of the issue, how it affected the individual/family, and what issues in the policy seem to reflect its national context. If you would not like this example discussed in the class, please let me know.

This assignment should be submitted through the course Ctools site by the end of the day on Friday, September 21.

Session 5 & 6 --Oct. 8 & 22 Parameters for cross-national comparative analysis

Readings:

**Cross-national policy influences—policy “convergence”** (for session #5)


**National values and policy expressions** (for session #5)


(o) OEDC. (2010). *A Family Affair: Intergenerational Social Mobility across OECD Countries.*
Policy development and public opinion  (for session #6)

Multiculturalism and social policy  (for session #6)
Chapter 1: Banting & Kymlick, “Setting the context)”

[Fall break—no class on Oct. 15]

Realms of social welfare/social service

[Note: In the discussion of individual areas of social welfare/social service, to the extent possible, students should explore how these areas are address in their target country]

Session 7--Oct. 29  Income Support

Readings:


**Assignment: Social welfare profile for a target country—due Oct. 29**

Session 8—Nov. 5 Health care

Readings:


Session 9—Nov. 12 Protecting the vulnerable—children and the elderly

Readings:


Session 10—Nov 19 Criminal justice/social protection

Readings:


Session 11 & 12—Nov 26 & Dec 3 Employment and labor protections/labor rights

**Readings:**

*Changes in Job Markets and Unionization* (for session #11)

*Labor protections/labor rights* (for session #12)
Cameron, C.D.R. (2003). Borderline decisions: Hoffman Plastic Compounds, the new Bracero Program, and the Supreme Court’s role in making federal labor policy. *UCLA Law Review*, 51: 1-34. [read pp. 1-8 and 23-34 re the Bracero program and Hoffman decisions; the middle section provides details of other precedents—read this if you’re interested in the background of the legal argument]
International Labour Office (ILO), Convention 182 “Worst Forms of Child Labour”
Examples of ILO ratifications by selected countries:

- Canada: 34 ratifications
- China: 24 ratifications
- Egypt: 64 ratifications
- Germany: 83 ratifications
- Russian Fed.: 66 ratifications
- United Kingdom: 86 ratifications
- United States: 14 ratifications


Session 13—Dec. 10  Discussion of student papers

*Assignment: A social welfare or social service area in the target country—due Dec. 10*