Social Work 670
Analytic Methods for social Policy Practice

Winter 2015
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Prerequisites: 522 or permission of instructor
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Thursdays 9:00-12:00
SSW 3752
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description:

Understanding the major analytic and quantitative tools used by practitioners engaged in assessing or evaluating human service systems is an essential component of social policy practice. This course will emphasize multiple program analysis, and students will be asked to analyze an area which consists mainly of programs serving special populations. Students will acquire beginning level skill in the use of a wide variety of analytic and quantitative tools, while gaining in-depth skill in a more limited number of tools and techniques. Competence in these skill areas will be gained by completing a major analysis of a human service system.

The underlying theme of this course will be how to increase the rationality of the choice process when applied to complex and rapidly changing human service systems. In short, scientific analysis opposed to political analysis or advocacy is emphasized.
Course Content:

Students will learn the major analytic and quantitative tools used by practitioners in assessing or evaluating human service programs or systems, which include a range of specific programs. The theme of this course is how to increase the rationality of the planning, analysis, and evaluation process, particularly of programs intended to serve the underprivileged or over-deprived populations. Students will learn that human service organizations include a wide variety of programs of diverse size and complexity, with respect to their activities and goals. This course will impart skills which can be applied at various levels of analysis in different contexts.

Course session topics may include: problem specification across systems of service, using social experiments, social indicators, forecasting, simulation models, etc., to identify problems; using secondary sources (e.g., census, annual reports, surveys, evaluations and audits) to quantify problems; using primary sources (e.g., interviews, surveys, quasi experimental designs) to quantify problems; using qualitative indicators of problems; developing options and solutions to systems of service problems; costing out options; utilizing other criteria (e.g., administrative ease, feasibility, stigma, etc.) to evaluate options; preparing analysis documents; diagnosing decision making situations; and enhancing utilization of results.

Several areas will be emphasized, including:

1. Careful diagnosis of a problem, whether of a client group, an organization, activity, or community.
2. Eliciting, formalizing, and explicating goals and objectives of various decision makers and interested parties in different problem, program, or organizational contexts.
3. Determining the data gathering and analysis techniques appropriate to various contexts.
4. Gathering, culling, analysis, and presentation of information, both quantitative and qualitative, as an aide to informed decisions.
5. Writing evaluation and analysis proposals.
6. Preparing and presenting evaluation reports and policy analyses, both periodic and final, tailored for different groups and different purposes.
Course Objectives:

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

1. Demonstrate beginning level competence in the use of the major analytical tools that are most commonly used to assess and evaluate complex systems of services.
2. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of two analytical tools and their application in the human services field.
3. Design a procedure for reviewing and assessing a major service system that encompasses a wide variety of separately mandated programs.
4. Identify the limitations of rational analysis and be able to determine when rational choice processes are desirable and feasible to use.
5. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to the use of analytic methods in social policy practice.

Course Design:

I will use a combination of lecture, discussion and in-class exercises completed in groups to examine a variety of contemporary issues. In addition to in-class exercises, students will complete three written assignments outside of class that will reflect techniques learned over the course of the semester. Videos will also be presented to illustrate various analytic methods.

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity:** Students will develop the capacity to identify ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, social class, age, and other forms of social stratification and disenfranchisement influence and are impacted by the social policy practice process.
- **Social Justice and Social Change:** This course will provide students with the capacity to participate in the social policy process and the ability to approach policy analytically by virtue of social work practice and ethics. Students will learn that social work practice and ethics play an important role in shaping the outcome of ongoing policy debates to reflect issues in social justice and change.
• **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation:** Students will learn that policies in human services are too often implemented in reaction to an issue, not proactively, due to changing social, economic, and political circumstances and influences. Promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation activities are difficult to evaluate and therefore raise special challenges in social policy implementation. Students will be exposed to innovative evaluation techniques (e.g., forecasting and simulation models) that can be used to analyze and evaluate promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation activities prior to the development, implementation, and analysis of any relevant policy issue or initiative.

• **Behavioral and Social Science Research:** Policies in human services are in a constant state of flux owing to changing social, economic, and political circumstances. Thus, any review of existing policy may be quickly outdated and has limited use as part of the training social work student’s carry into their careers. Therefore, students will be provided with social science models and theories that can be used as tools to analyze and evaluate any policy issue encountered in the course of their professional activities. Examples of the use of social science in policy development will be presented (e.g. Coleman report on education).

**Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:**

Ethical standards of social work practice (NASW Code of Ethics) and evaluation practice (Program Evaluation Standards) will be used to review issues commonly confronted in social policy practice. The ethical themes of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, fidelity, and justice will be particularly emphasized and discussed.

**Course Assignments and Expectations:**

There are two assigned text for this course. The majority of the reading for this course will come from your own investigation of the literature dealing with your topic of interest.

The structure of the course will involve some lecture (especially at the beginning of the course), in-class work (done in-class and in small groups, practice exercises
of concepts learned), and much independent work by class participants. Individual meetings with the instructor will also be required.

Assignments will consist of three papers in memo format, a class presentation and a final exam. The final exam will take place on the last day of class and will require that you apply techniques learned in class. The final exam will mirror in-class exercises done throughout the semester. Class participation in discussions will also be taken into account for the final grade.

We will use assigned readings in class discussions and as the basis for in-class assignments and there is an expectation that students will read assigned materials as required. Each memo will be worth 20 points. Papers can receive full point value only if they are turned in on time and will lose 1 point each day they are late. The class presentation will be worth 20 points. The final exam is worth 10 points, and 10 points will come from your participation in class discussions. Final grades will be determined by converting your points into the 9.0 grading scale described in the UM SSW Student Guide.

Memo 1. This memo will identify the problem/issue and the policy you will focus on for the duration of the course. You will also describe the human service organization that might be part of impacting the problem you will focus on over the course of the semester and how the organization itself is set up to deliver the policy you are going to focus on as well as how the policy fits into the overall structure of the human service organization.
Due: February 5th. A maximum of 20 points possible if turned in on time.

Memo 2. This memo will explore the various pieces of information used to define the problem, develop the policy, institutionalize and/or implement the policy. You will discuss/critique the information available about your social issue. You will identify the goals of the policy and discuss the way in which the information is used to support the goals. Finally, you will identify the ways in which information about the problem supports certain values although the values themselves are not made explicitly visible.
Due: February 26th. A maximum of 20 points is possible if turned in on time.

Memo 3. In this final memo you will critique the policy you identified in your first memo based on the typology of the solution put forward in the policy. You will analyze the solution in terms of the definition of the goals of the policy and the way in which the problem was defined. You will propose alternative solutions
and discuss why they were not considered or, if considered, not chosen and the impact of different solutions on different groups of people. You will discuss the impact of implementing the policy in the setting you described in memo 1. Finally, you will make recommendations about how additional research might impact current policies.  
Due: March 26th. A maximum of 20 points is possible if turned in on time.

Presentation. You will present your main points to your group using a one page summary of your argument and any attachments you think are important. Due. A maximum of 20 points is possible.

Final Exam. The final exam will take place in class and you will be asked to utilize information I hand out about a social problem in a specified setting. It will follow the format of in-class exercises completed in small groups throughout the semester. April 17. A maximum of 10 points is possible.

Class participation. Because I will run the class in a participatory fashion, you must attend 11 of the 14 classes and engage in class/small group discussions to receive the 10 class participation points. You are not required to provide me with a reason when you are unable to attend class. A maximum of 10 points is possible.

Required Book:  
ESSENTIALS OF SOCIAL WORK POLICY PRACTICE  

WRITING PUBLIC POLICY  
Smith, Catherine F. ISBN-13 978-0199933921  
Edition 3

I will hand out additional readings in class as needed.
Course Outline

January 8th
Overview of the course.
Introductions
Roots of policy analysis, a review
Introduction to alternative models of policy analysis

January 15th
Policy development and analysis as a political process rather than a rational process.

Readings:
Rocha- Introduction to community based policy practice.
Smith- Introduction, List of writing samples

January 22nd
Goals of policy development – equity and efficiency

Rocha- chapter 2, Essentials of the planning process
Smith- Chapter 2, Communication in the process

January 29th  Memo 1 due
Goals of policy development – security and liberty

Readings:
Rocha- chapter 3 Essentials of effective interpersonal communication and participation.
Smith- chapter 3 Definition: Frame the problem

February 5th
Defining the problem – strategic representation of situations and claims in a political process. Symbols and Numbers.

Readings:
Rocha- chapter 4, Communicating with the public through the media
Smith- chapter 4, Analyze and advise
February 11th
Defining the problem, continued – causes and interests.

Readings:
Rocha-Chapter 5, Utilizing technology in Policy practice
Smith-Chapter 5, Legislative history: know the record

February 20
Memo 2 due
Policy decisions are a political game

Readings:
Rocha- Chapter 6 essentials of Interest Groups
Smith- Position papers

February 26th
Policy solutions – Inducements and rules

Readings:
Rocha-chapter 7 Essentials of community based policy practice
Smith-chapter 7 Petitions and proposals

March 12th
Policy solutions – facts and rights
Readings:
Rocha- chapter 8, Legislative policy practice
Smith chapter 8, Briefing memo or opinion statement

March 19th
Policy solutions – power or restructuring authority to solve problems.

Readings:
Rocha- Chapter 9 Monitoring Bureaucracy and creating change within organizations.
Smith- Chapter 9 Public hearing
March 26th  
Memo 3 due
Rocha –Chapter 10, Judiciary policy practice
Smith - Chapter 10 Written public comment

April 2nd
Policy evaluation – some of the pitfalls
Class Presentations

April 9th
Class presentations

April 17
Final exam (in class).