



<b>Course title:</b>	Essentials of Social Welfare Policy	
<b>Course #/term:</b>	SSW 508 Section 004, Fall 2021	
<b>Time and place:</b>	Tuesdays 9-12, Room 1636 SSWB	
<b>Credit hours:</b>	3	
<b>Instructor:</b>	Kristin Seefeldt	
<b>Pronouns:</b>	She/her/hers	
<b>Contact info:</b>	<b>Email:</b> kseef@umich.edu	<b>Phone:</b> 734-615-2113
	You may expect a response within 48 hours	
<b>Office:</b>	2726 SSWB	
<b>Office hours:</b>	By Appointment, see end of document for sign ups	

## 1. Course Statement

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### a. Course description

This course surveys the history of social welfare policy, services, and the social work profession. It explores current social welfare issues in the context of their history and the underlying rationale and values that support different approaches. Emphasis is placed on major fields of social work service such as: income support, health care, mental health, and services to the elderly. Analytic frameworks with regard to social welfare policies and services are presented. These frameworks identify strengths and weaknesses in the current social welfare system with respect to multiculturalism and diversity; social justice and social change; behavioral and social science theory and research; and social work relevant promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programs and services in relation to diverse 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).

### b. Course objectives and competencies

- Understand historical context and its current applications within the profession and practice (Essential 6, EPAS 7)
- Recognize power dynamics; ensure voices are included (Essential 14; EPAS 6)
- Understanding the current legislative processes (Essential 28; EPAS 2)

- Assess strategies to advocate for social, economic and environmental justice and change, while protecting human rights (Essential 29; EPAS 2, 3)
- Recognize the extent to which structures, policies and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, create or enhance privilege and power (Essential 30; EPAS 1, 2, 5)
- Analyze policies that advance human rights and social, economic and/or environmental justice (Essential 34; EPAS 5)
- Understand the history of social work practice and social welfare delivery systems and current applications within the profession (including inherent ambiguity) (Essential 39; EPAS 1, 5)
- Understand major social welfare policy domains (eg: health, immigration, income support) (Essential 39; EPAS 1,5)
- Understand frameworks of ethical decision making and how to apply critical thinking to those frameworks in the social welfare policy arena (Essential 44; EPAS 1, 5)

**c. Course design**

The course will utilize a combination of lectures, discussion, and in-class exercises.

**d. Intensive focus on PODS**

This course integrates Privilege, Oppression, Social Justice, and Diversity (P.O.D.S.) 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 developing 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 P.O.D.S. learning.

## 2. Class Requirements

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**a. Text and class materials**

All of the materials you will need for class will be under the corresponding “**Module**” in Canvas. These are labeled below by week (e.g., module 2) and by date (e.g. September 7). You will notice up to 3 different categories:

**Read this:** Click on this to find the required readings for the week

**Watch this:** Click on this for any videos to watch (sometimes it might be a podcast)

**Activities:** Click on this for the activities for the week

Please note that while every week except the first will have at least one reading, there may not always be videos and/or activities. I’m still curating videos and podcasts, so later in the term you’ll see “TBD,” meaning that the selection is still to be determined.

However, any new material will be posted in the Canvas module at least a week before it is due.

Additionally, any powerpoints I use during class will be posted under the module.

**\*\*Important notes about assigned readings, videos, and activities\*\***

1. With the exception of the first week, students are required to complete the readings, watch the videos, and do the activity prior to each week's class.
2. The readings and videos reflect a diverse array of perspectives, including historical perspectives. Due to the age of some documents, language used may not be current. You may find some ideas expressed in certain readings to be controversial and not reflective of social work values. However, these ideas are part of the current political discourse in the United States, and as social workers, you need to be aware of these positions so that you are able to be a better advocate.
3. We may not always discuss each reading in class; however, each student is responsible for the material covered by the readings. Students will need to draw upon the readings in order to complete the final exam.

**Important, Supplementary Media**

1. The best way to keep current on policy issues is to regularly read a major newspaper, such as the *New York Times* ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)) or *The Washington Post* ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)). *The Wall Street Journal*, although focused on business issues, often has very good feature articles on domestic policy. As with all newspapers, one should be careful to distinguish between the news reports and the editorial commentary.
  - a. The **NYT** also offers a student discount rate on student subscriptions to hard copy editions, and it's also accessible (with a day delay) through the library.
  - b. A limited number of articles per month in the Washington Post can be freely accessed, and this paper covers the Congressional issues with great detail.
2. News reports and feature shows (such as on MSNBC, CNN or ABC Nightline) are another source of information about current policy issues. The PBS News Hour on Public Television is an excellent source of more in-depth discussion of ongoing and emerging policy issues.

**Additional Recommended Media**

- Local Newspapers (Ann Arbor, Detroit);
- CNN News and Policy discussions;
- "All Things Considered" and/or "Morning Edition" on National Public Radio. This can be accessed locally via WKAR-FM (90.5) or WUOM-FM (91.7).
- Evening Network News - (CBS, ABC, NBC).

b. Class schedule

Class	Agenda	Required Readings, Video, Activities
<p><b>Module 1</b> <b>August 31</b></p>	<p><b>Introduction and course overview</b></p>	<p><b>Readings:</b> Syllabus Staller, Historical Arc</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Allocation exercise</p>
<p><b>Module 2</b> <b>September 7</b></p>	<p><b>U.S. Federal Budget and Taxes</b></p> <p>In this session we'll explore and demystify the federal budget and income taxes. Both are integral for promoting social justice, providing social services, and tackling (or not) inequality. Yet, particularly in recent years, both are the source of political fights and public disgruntlement. We'll also look at state and local budgets and place the U.S. in a comparative context.</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b> Staller, "Federal and state budget basics for social workers: Social welfare impact and social justice implications"</p> <p><b>Watch:</b> Budget video</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Play Fiscal Ship</p>
<p><b>Module 3</b> <b>September 14</b></p>	<p><b>Understanding the Foundations of Government:</b></p> <p>We will look at the U.S. Constitution as an historical document and a living document. What does the "historic" Constitution say about inclusion and exclusion? How does the "living" Constitution relate to social welfare policy? How was political power structured?</p> <p>We will consider government</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> United States Constitution Amendments to the Constitution Elliott and Hughes "A Brief History of Slavery That you Didn't Learn in School"</p> <p><b>Video:</b> None</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Global constitutions (if we have time)</p>

Class	Agenda	Required Readings, Video, Activities
	<p>structure (federal, state, local), hierarchal nature of policy (statutes, regulations, rules, etc.) and different types of policy (Constitutional, judicial, legislative, executive). Pay attention to federalism, the enumerated powers clauses and reserve powers amendment, the general welfare clause, voting rights amendments, and the roots (and legacy) of structural racism.</p>	
<p><b>Module 4 September 21</b></p>	<p><b>Social Welfare in Historical Context</b></p> <p>Where do our current conceptions of deservingness come from? Who should be responsible for providing assistance? These notions evolve over time, although certain themes remain constant. We begin exploring these and related questions by examining social welfare “service delivery” from the poorhouse through the Progressive era and the various state and federal policies that shaped and still maintain inequality. The end of this time period also marks the beginnings the social work as a profession.</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Carlton-LeNay. “African American Social Welfare History”</p> <p>Reisch, U.S. Social Policy and Social Welfare: A Historical Overview. <b>Read pages 53-72</b></p> <p><b>Watch:</b> Beliefs, Myths, and Values</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> In class</p>
<p><b>Module 5 September 28</b></p>	<p><b>Social Welfare in Historical Context, Continued</b></p> <p>The Great Depression of the 1930s marked the largest</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Staller document</p> <p>Reisch, U.S. Social Policy and Social Welfare: A Historical Overview. <b>Read</b></p>

Class	Agenda	Required Readings, Video, Activities
	<p>economic catastrophe in U.S. history. But from that event came the establishment of the welfare state, as well as various programs intended to provide immediate relief from the Depression. Yet even with the expansion of the welfare state, certain groups continued to be excluded.</p>	<p><b>pages 72-79.</b></p> <p><b>Watch:</b> Major Social Welfare Programs</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> In class</p>
<p><b>Module 6</b> <b>October 5</b></p>	<p><b>The Intersection of Immigration and Social Welfare: Historical Roots and Contemporary Debates</b></p> <p>Debates about immigration and related policies provide an exemplary case to bridge history with current day events. How has the U.S. responded to new arrivals? How has and does that response vary by race, ethnicity, and country of origin? In what ways do current debates reflect long-standing biases and prejudices?</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Betten, N. &amp; Mohl, R.A. "From Discrimination to Repatriation: Mexican Life in Gary, Indiana, During the Great Depression"</p> <p><b>Watch:</b> The Chinese Exclusion Act</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> TBD</p>
<p><b>Module 7</b> <b>October 12</b></p>	<p><b>Poverty and Inequality-Measuring and "Fighting"</b></p> <p>Poverty is a concept that is widely discussed but its meaning and how to address it is hotly contested. In this session we'll look at various</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Matthews, Dylan. 2014. "Everything You Need to Know about the War on Poverty." <i>Washington Post</i>.</p> <p>Cassidy, J. (2014) "Picketty's Inequality Story in Six Charts."</p>

Class	Agenda	Required Readings, Video, Activities
	ways to conceptualize poverty and its causes as well as a closely related concept- income inequality. This session will also highlight the U.S.'s War on Poverty, a concerted set of policies and services to ameliorate poverty. Did we win this war?	<b>Watch:</b> Poverty and Inequality <b>Activity:</b> Re-working the Poverty Line
<b>October 19</b>	<b>No class, fall break</b>	
<b>Module 8 October 26</b>	<b>Issue Analysis in-class exercise</b>	To be assigned
<b>Module 9 November 2</b>	<b>Election issues- Class meeting optional</b>	Material to be determined by class interest
<b>Module 10 November 9</b>  <b>POLICY WORKSHEET DUE</b>	<b>The Safety Net Today- Contraction of the Welfare State</b>  If the 1935 Social Security Act marked the expansion of the U.S. welfare state, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity moved the country away from guarantees of benefits and toward state and local responsibility and discretion in providing assistance. What are some of the ramifications? And in what ways has the public assistance always been	<b>Read:</b> Seefeldt (2016), <i>Abandoned Families</i> , Chapter 5  Edin, Kathryn and H. Luke Shaefer. (2015). "Welfare is Dead," (Canvas) <i>America</i> . New York: Houghton Mifflin.  <b>Video:</b> Two Dollars a Day  <b>Activity:</b> Michigan Application for Assistance

Class	Agenda	Required Readings, Video, Activities
	difficult to navigate?	
<b>Module 11</b> <b>November 16</b>	<b>Housing, Wealth, and the Wealth Gap</b>  Slavery, Jim Crow, and financial and housing policies have all established and continue to maintain large racial wealth disparities. Why does this matter, and what can be done?	<b>Read:</b> <i>Abandoned Families</i> , Chapter 6  <b>Watch:</b> Elliot video  <b>Activity:</b> TBD
<b>Module 12</b> <b>November 23</b>	<b>The Complex Welfare State: Health Care as a Case Study</b>  The U.S. is the only highly industrialized country that does not provide universal health insurance to its citizen. How did that come to be, and how does that relate to other themes we have explored during the semester (e.g., federalism, “deservingness,” racial discrimination, othering of immigrants and LGBTQIA+ individuals, etc).	<b>Read:</b> Michener, “Federalism, Health Care, and Inequality.”  Kurzweil, (2014). “Justice is What Love Looks Like in Public:’ How the Affordable Care Act Falls Short on Transgender Health Care Access.”  <b>Watch:</b> TBD  <b>Activity:</b> TBD

Class	Agenda	Required Readings, Video, Activities
<b>Module 13</b> <b>November 30</b>  <b>Final Exam</b> <b>Distributed</b>	<b>Policy in the Age of Covid</b>	<b>Read: TBD</b>  <b>Watch: TBD</b>  <b>Activity: TBD</b>
<b>December 7</b>	<b>Wrap Up Discussion</b>	

### c. Assignments

You have three assignments:

#### Policy worksheet

You will answer specific questions around a particular, current policy debate. A separate handout details this assignment and will be available under the “Syllabus, Assignments and Other Administrative Materials.” Upload the assignment to Canvas before class on **November 9**. If you need assistance with writing, please consult the SSW’s writing help website: [ssw.umich.edu/writing-help](http://ssw.umich.edu/writing-help)

#### Issue Analysis

The “Issue Analysis” assignment will be completed in class on **October 26**. It is a group activity and will be graded pass/no pass. Students who miss class that day must complete a make-up assignment.

#### Final Exam

The final is a take-home exam consisting of short answers essays, covering material in readings and emphasized in class lectures, handouts and discussion. It will review material from the whole semester and there will be choices in which essays you answer. The exam will be distributed on **November 30** and due **December 13**, uploaded via Canvas.

## Assignments and Due Dates

<b>Issue Analysis</b>	<b>25% of grade</b>	<b>October 26 in class</b>
<b>Policy Worksheet</b>	<b>35% of grade</b>	<b>November 9 at beginning of class; submitted via Canvas</b>
<b>Final exam</b>	<b>40% of grade</b>	<b>December 13 by 5pm; submit via Canvas</b>

### d. Attendance and class participation

Learning takes place when you can engage with the material, and part of that engagement occurs in discussions with each other. Missing class deprives you of this opportunity and also affects your colleagues when they are not able to learn from you, so please attend as much as you possibly can. Additionally, it will be difficult to pass the final exam unless you attend and participate in class.

Participation in class can take many forms. I realize that not everyone is comfortable speaking in a larger group; if you can, please try. But there will be ample opportunity to participate in smaller group discussions.

I hope that all students will work with me to create and foster a learning environment that promotes professional socialization, respectfulness, and broadens our mutual awareness of human differences and diversity. Students will be encouraged in this class to examine how the structure of our current social welfare systems evolved from and still reflects biases and negative beliefs about certain populations. Questioning and disagreeing are all part of the learning process, and I would encourage all students to engage in these activities with thoughtfulness and respect.

The School's [Policy on Class Attendance](#) can be found in the MSW Student Guide.

### e. Grading

The criteria for each grade are as follows:

A+, A, A- Superlative mastery of subject content, demonstration of critical analysis, creativity and/or complexity in completion of assignment. The difference between A and A- is based on the degree to which excellence in these skills are demonstrated.

B+ Mastery of subject content beyond expected competency, but has not

demonstrated additional critical analysis, creativity or complexity in the completion of the assignment.

**B Mastery of subject content at level of expected competency – meets course expectations**

B- Less than adequate competency but demonstrates student learning and potential for mastery of subject content.

C or C- Demonstrates a minimal understanding of subject content. Significant areas needing improvement to meet course requirements.

F Student has failed to demonstrate minimal understanding of subject content.

I grade all worksheets and exams anonymously. I download them all at once and grade randomly. Put only your student identification number on your submitted work. After I have read and graded all the papers and exams, I will determine which paper belongs to whom. If you want me to read drafts of your worksheet I generally am able to do so but know that you may give up anonymity. Having me provide feedback on a draft is not a guarantee of an “A” (or any other grade).

Late work will **not** be penalized provided you have communicated with me in advance about an alternative due date. However, it is to your benefit to turn in assignments when they are due, since you’ll only accumulate more work as the semester continues.

Written work will be evaluated in relation to how well it addresses the topic and the clarity of presentation. It is important to follow assignment instructions carefully and to read and 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.

Students are expected to avoid “language that might imply sexual, ethnic, or other kinds of discrimination, stereotyping, or bias.” (*Health and Social Work, 11:3, Summer 1986.*)

Challenges to any grade must be in writing (not verbal); must be specific and must be based on substantive arguments not on nebulous references to “fairness.” The instructor reserves the right to re-read, and re-grade, the work in its entirety in the case of a challenge. The grade may be adjusted up or down.

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Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here:

<https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources>. They include:

- *Safety and emergency preparedness*
- *Mental health and well-being*
- *Teaching evaluations*
- *Proper use of names and pronouns*
- *Accommodations for students with disabilities*
- *Religious/spiritual observances*
- *Military deployment*
- *Writing skills and expectations*
- *Academic integrity and plagiarism*

### **Contacting me/Office hours**

Email is the easiest way to reach me. In your subject line, please put “SSW 530” and then I will easily see it so that I can answer promptly.

The telephone number listed on the first page is my office phone- if you leave a message there I will get an alert on my email.

Office hours will generally be remote this year unless you make other arrangements with me. All of you have access to sign up via my Google calendar. To sign up, go to this link: <https://calendar.google.com/calendar/selfsched?sstoken=UUdpd3hqQ1pgaHU1fGRIZmF1bHR8YjktZmFIZmVkm2UzZmE3N2I0YzAyMjY1NDfkN2U3ODE>

You will be able to see the time slots that I’m available to meet. Pick one and hit save.

The appointment link is also on the front page of the course’s Canvas site. I’d love to get to know all of you, so feel free to sign up even if it’s just to chat!

### Updated COVID-19 Statement

For the safety of all students, faculty, and staff on campus, it is important for each of us to be mindful of safety measures that have been put in place for our protection. Your participation in this course is conditional upon your adherence to all safety measures mandated by the state of Michigan and the University, including properly wearing a face covering in class and compliance with the University COVID-19 Vaccination Policy. Other applicable and additional safety measures may be described in the Campus Maize & Blueprint. Your ability to participate in this course may be impacted by failure to comply with campus safety measures. Individuals seeking to request an accommodation related to the face covering requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the Office for Institutional Equity and those seeking an exemption related to the vaccination requirement should submit an exemption request through WolverineAccess. I also encourage you to review the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities and

the COVID-related Addendum to the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities.