



Course title:	Practicing Policy with Current Events
Course #/Term:	SW 649.006/Winter 2022
Time and place:	Monday, 9am-12pm, SSWB Room 3752
Credit hours:	3
Prerequisites:	SW 508
Instructor:	Marlanna Landeros, MSW
Pronouns:	She/her/hers
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Office hours:	By appointment, I may often be available before or after class weekly. When communicating with me use the subject line SW 649

1. Course Statement

This policy skills course will help students develop an understanding of how to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and/or environmental justice through the application of critical thinking skills. Content area will be drawn from current events (e.g., immigration, child welfare, health care debates), and students will learn how to critically analyze the policy implications, prerequisites for any informed, professional, and ethical policy advocacy. Students will develop strategies to engage in policy practice to effect change and advocate for clients. Finally, students will gain specialized knowledge and skills in a current policy area relevant to social work practice, which will also give students the ability to advocate for their clients, the profession, and the promotion of social justice.

a. Course description

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b. Course objectives and competencies

- Articulate framings of policy-related stories as social constructions (Essential 6, 28, 39; EPAS 1, 2, 5, 7).
- Locate policy resources (e.g. legislation, regulations, white papers) needed to understand a social welfare policy problem (Essential 14, EPAS 6)
- Analyze a social welfare policy issue in terms of contextual features (e.g., historical, political, legislative, ideological) while taking into account structural privileges and inequities (Essential 29, 30, 34, 35; EPAS 1, 2, 3, 5).
- Identify strategies for resolving a social welfare policy problem that advances human rights; social, economic, and/or environmental justice; and address power dynamics to ensure voices are included (Essential 6, 28, 39; EPAS 1, 2, 5, 7).
- Advocate for a specific solution to a social welfare policy problem in a way that acknowledges contextual and social equity issues surrounding the problem (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 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 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 PODS learning.

This course encourages students to develop critical thinking skills so that they can understand the ways in which various economic and political theories are used in the policy process and how those frameworks can promote social justice or can oppress individuals and groups (Critical Contextual Thinking; Critical Awareness). Students will use principles of social justice to examine current public policy debates and to interrogate various institutions and economic models (Critical Contextual Thinking; Critical Awareness; Conflict, Dialog, and Community). Using knowledge

gained in the course, students will be able to identify points of interventions within existing institutions to promote socially just policies (Actions Toward Social Justice Vision).

2. Class Requirements

- a. All readings are in Canvas by module and will be foundations to class discussions/activities. To fully engage in the course topic and become a competent and skilled social work practitioner, it is expected that students will complete all required readings and videos prior to the class session. PowerPoint presentations will be posted in Canvas by the start of class.

The reading material for this course will take four forms. All of it will be available online and/or will be posted on Canvas:

- Current Media – news and educational sources of record as selected by the instructor. (E.g. print and electronic news sources such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*; public television or radio shows such as the *NewsHour* and NPR programs such as *All Things Considered*, or *Morning Edition*; curated podcasts or youtube videos);
- Non-governmental Organizations or Think Tank Websites as selected by the instructor and relevant to the course topics (e.g. Center for Budget and Policy Priorities; Kaiser Family Foundation, Heritage Foundation; Human Rights Watch; Brookings Institution);
- Governmental Departments, Agencies and Reports as selected by the instructor and relevant to the course topic (such as federal and state legislative information, judicial sources, executive orders, state agency policy manuals); and
- Selected readings posted on Canvas (e.g social science articles; theoretical literature; policy briefs; policy documents).

Throughout the course students will be expected to follow current events related to social welfare policy issues which impact social work practitioners and their clients. The course may focus on a topical content area as defined by the instructor before the start of the semester (e.g. immigration, child welfare, climate change, natural disaster relief, water rights). Assigned readings will be selected by the instructor accordingly. Additional pertinent short readings or podcasts might be added over the semester. The instructor will give advance notice to students or bring these

additional materials to class as news events unfold. Closed captioned media sources, audio versions, and other formats will be used with an eye toward inclusivity and accessibility of all students. However, students with any unique challenges should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to ensure adequate access to materials.

- b. Class schedule: The course schedule that follows is tentative and is subject to change. All changes will be announced in advance so that you will have sufficient time to make adjustments in your readings and assignments. Some class time will be provided for students to meet with their groups during sessions one through four. Expectation is that group work will also need to be conducted outside of class as well. Group presentation is due session five.

Class Session/Date	Agenda Practicing Policy Skills	Required Readings & Assignments
<p>Session 1 3/7/22</p>	<p>Social Problem Construction: Competing Framings of Policy-Related Stories</p> <p>Goal of session: understand how issues get socially constructed and framed to become “problems” and the implications of different types of framings</p>	<p>Media Story Canvas Reading Other Sources as assigned</p>
<p>Session 2 3/14/22</p>	<p>Finding Policy: Locating, Identifying, and Reading Policy</p> <p>Goal of session: should be able to find the various bills, laws, executive orders, and/or regulations related to the topic of interest</p>	<p>Media Story Canvas Reading Other Sources as assigned</p>

<p>Session 3 3/21/22</p>	<p>Consuming Policy Stories: Deconstructing Arguments and Contextualizing Information</p> <p>Goal of session: should be able to analyze a story and answer questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is getting presented as fact? • What types of evidence are being brought to bear? • When personal stories are used-to what end? How do you interpret personal stories and opinions? • Who gets to represent a community? • How do pictures, language, and emotion get used to present a certain point of view? • What are the critiques being made? Are they substantive or personal? 	<p>Media Story Canvas Reading Other Sources as assigned</p>
<p>Session 4 3/28/22</p>	<p>Identifying Advocacy Strategies: Making your Voices Heard</p> <p>Goal of session: should understand the various forms that policy advocacy takes and be able to identify effective and persuasive approaches.</p>	<p>Media Story Canvas Reading Other Sources as assigned</p>

4/4/22 NO CLASS	Break for Group Presentation Preparations	Prepare Final Group Projects
Session 5 4/11/22	Synthesizing the Pieces: Policy Presentations	Present Final Group Projects

c. Assignments

Assignment	Due date	Percent of overall grade
Final Project: Policy Performance	Final Class Session 4/11/22	Pass /Fail

Master Assignment:

Policy Performance:

Producing a News Story, Podcast, or Public Educational Announcement

Students will work in small groups to ‘produce’ a news story, podcast, youtube video or other research-based educational segment. These will not be opinion pieces or propaganda. Rather the final product must reflect careful research, critical engagement and thoughtful analysis of a current events topic. Students will “perform” (or “present”) their projects in the final class (5-8 minutes a piece); submit a written transcript of their segment, complete compendium of references and sources consulted and attest to the equal participation of each member of the group. In addition, each assignment must be submitted with an individual attestation from each student of their unique efforts toward producing the final project and how the project elements, as well as course content, relate to mastery of the course competencies. Students must demonstrate that they can:

- Contextualize the competing frames of a specific policy problem critical to social work practice;
- Critically assess the policy response using the skills developed in class;
- Synthesize material about this policy problem and response in an informative, factual, educational presentation;
- Identify a socially just policy response using critical analysis, ensuring all voices are heard;

d. Attendance and class participation

[Policy on Class Attendance](#) found in the MSW Student Guide.

This is a one-credit, required, course. For this reason, attendance is mandatory at every class session unless other accommodations have been made with the instructor ahead of the class.

There are four basic requirements for this course. Each will be used in assessing the overall final grade. They are:

- Attending all five class sessions which include lectures and skill building;
- Reading all assignments and coming to class prepared;
- Participating in class discussions and activities in a substantive and meaningful way; and
- Participating in the final project, the Policy Performance Assignment (see master assignment), including final presentation, written product, and final submission.

e. Grading

Review [Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction](#) as well as [Student Grievance procedures](#) and the [policy for grading in special circumstances](#). Here are some resources around [testing and grading from CRLT](#).

Course grading is on a pass or fail basis. However, mandatory attendance, the course expectations listed above, and the final project performance will be factored into the final assessment as specified by the instructor.

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*