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 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).

b. Course design

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

c. Intensive focus on PODS

This course integrates content about privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice (PODS) 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. Text and class materials

The reading material for this course will take four forms. All 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. This section of this course will focus on the following topics under consideration by city staff or local advocacy groups to bring to the Ann Arbor City Council in 2022:

1. Sustainable Energy Utility – creating an Ann Arbor-based energy utility that uses solar and geothermal energy to generate electricity
2. Municipalization of Existing Energy Utility – taking over the existing electric utility and converting it to an Ann Arbor-owned city public utility
3. Revising the Early Leasing Ordinance – identifying possible revisions to the new Early Leasing Ordinance passed in 2021
4. Unarmed Crisis Response – creating a crisis response program, outside the police department, in which responders are unarmed
5. Opioid Settlement Spending Priorities – recommend spending priorities for the city’s spending of opioid settlement funds
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Session Topic</th>
<th>Required Readings &amp; Class Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Group breakout time |
| **Session 2**<br>March 17 | Finding Policy: Locating, Identifying, and Reading Policy | City of Ann Arbor websites:  
[https://www.a2gov.org/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.a2gov.org/Pages/default.aspx)  
Episode 2: How to Read a City Council Meeting Agenda (Ann Arbor AF Podcast)  
| **Session 3**<br>March 24 | Consuming Policy Stories: Deconstructing Arguments and Contextualizing Information | Episode 13: Power, Perceptions, and Personalities of Council (Ann Arbor AF Podcast)  
[https://annarboraf.com/podcast-episode-13/](https://annarboraf.com/podcast-episode-13/)  
Media stories relevant to group topics on Canvas |
### Session 4

**March 31**

Identifying Advocacy Strategies: Making your Voices Heard

Episode 9: Budgets and Budget Season (Ann Arbor AF Podcast)

Kansas University’s Community Toolbox
1. Toolkit 10
2. Toolkit 11
3. Chapter 25 (sections 4 & 5)

### Session 5

**April 14**

Synthesizing the Pieces: Policy Presentations

1. Final Project Presentations
2. Panel: Social Workers in Local Government
3. Class Reflection

### c. Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Percent of overall grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final Group Project: Policy Performance + Associated Pieces</td>
<td>April 14, 18:00 (6:00pm) Eastern Time</td>
<td>Pass /Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### d. Attendance and class participation

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.
There are four basic requirements for this course. Each will be used in assessing whether a student passes this course. They are:

- Arriving on time and attending all five in-person class sessions which include lectures, group work, and skill building and practice;
- 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, including final presentation, written product, and final submission.

e. Grading

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](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**