



Course title:	Practicing Policy with Current Events
Course #/term:	SSW 649, Section 002, Winter 2023
Time and place:	Monday, 9:00am – 12:00pm, March 6, 13, 20, 27 and April 3, SSWB B684
Credit hours:	1
Prerequisites:	None
Instructor:	Linda Edwards-Brown, LMSW
Pronouns:	She, her, hers
Contact info:	Email: lgeb@umich.edu You may expect a response within 48 hours
Office:	3832 SSWB
Office hours:	By appointment (please email to schedule)

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

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. Students will develop strategies to engage in policy practice to effect change and advocate for clients.

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 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. Text and class materials

The reading material for this course will take four forms. All of it will be available online and/or will be posted on Canvas. Some materials may require electronic access to external links. Some materials may be accessed within the University of Michigan Library materials. To access these materials you will need to log onto your University account using your University username and password.

- 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.

Expected Time Commitment

This is a 1-credit class – Weekly hours of time for this 5-week course, including class sessions and work outside of class (class preparation, assignments, exercises, etc.). averages to about 6-7 hours per week

b. Class schedule

Time will be provided during class for students to meet with their groups. However, it is expected that groups will meet outside of class time as well.

Date/Time	Agenda Practicing Policy Skills	Required Readings & Assignments
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<p>Session 1 3/6/23</p>	<p>Social Problem Construction: Competing Framings of Policy- Related Stories</p> <p>Session objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the difference between a social condition and a social problem. 2. Understand how social conditions become constructed into social problems. 3. Understand why the framing used in constructing a social problem matters. 	<p>Read: Syllabus</p> <p>Staller, K. (2010). Social problem construction and its impact on program and policy responses. In S.B. Kamerman, S. Phipps, & A. S. Ben-Arieh (Eds.), <i>From child welfare to child well-being</i> (pp. 155–173). Springer Science+Business Media. DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-3377-2_10</p> <p>Russonello, G. (2021, March 19). Democrats confront a surge at the border. <i>The New York Times</i>. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/19/us/politics/democrats-biden-border-immigration.html</p> <p>Watch: Seefeldt, K., (2021). <i>Social problem construction</i> [Video]. Canvas. University of Michigan.</p> <p>Complete: Reflective Discussion Project Deliverable</p>
<p>Session 2 3/13/23</p>	<p>Finding Policy: Locating, Identifying, and Reading Policy</p> <p>Session objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn about the various types of formal policy (e.g., bill, law, executive order, regulation) 2. Learn how and where to locate policy. 	<p>Read: GovTrack.us. (2021). <i>H.R. 6: American Dream and Promise Act of 2021</i></p> <p>Center for Migration Studies. (n.d.). <i>President Biden’s executive actions on immigration</i>. https://cmsny.org/biden-immigration-executive-actions/</p>

		<p>Watch: Seefeldt, K., (2021). <i>Finding policy</i> [Video]. Canvas. University of Michigan.</p> <p>Complete: Project Deliverable Reflective Discussion</p>
<p>Session 3 3/20/23</p>	<p>Consuming Policy Stories: Deconstructing Arguments and Contextualizing Information</p> <p>Session objectives: Understand how to consume policy stories by asking the following questions-</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 the substantive or personal? 	<p>Watch: Seefeldt, K., (2021). <i>Consuming policy</i> [Video]. Canvas. University of Michigan.</p> <p>Fox News. (2021, March 24). <i>Arizona mayor declares state of emergency over border crisis</i> [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcX0qizRuyg</p> <p>PBS NewsHour. (2021, March 26). <i>Immigrant families in limbo as Biden's immigration bill fails to get support in Congress</i> [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzLeiDcrZio</p> <p>Complete: Reflective Discussion Project Deliverable</p>
<p>Session 4 3/27/23</p>	<p>Identifying Advocacy Strategies: Making your Voices Heard</p> <p>Session objective: Identify advocacy strategies that are equitable and advance the issue.</p>	<p>Read: Richwine, J. (2021, April 4). <i>Amnesty would impose large costs on social security and medicare</i>. Center for Immigration Studies.</p>

		<p>https://cis.org/Report/Amnesty-Would-Impose-Large-Costs-Social-Security-and-Medicare</p> <p>Brown, T. C., Megan, K., Mason, J., & Ramon, C. (2018). <i>Immigration's effect on the social security system</i>. Bipartisan Policy Center. https://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Immigrations-Effect-on-the-Social-Security-System.pdf</p> <p>Watch:</p> <p>Seefeldt, K., (2021). <i>Identifying advocacy strategies</i> [Video]. Canvas. University of Michigan.</p> <p>Complete:</p> <p>Reflective Discussion Project Deliverable</p>
<p>Session 5 4/3/23</p>	<p>Synthesizing the Pieces: Policy Presentations</p>	<p>Read:</p> <p>Wilks, T. (2012). Cause advocacy. In <i>Advocacy and social work practice</i>. Open University Press.</p> <p>Watch:</p> <p>Seefeldt, K., (2021). <i>Synthesizing the pieces</i> [Video]. Canvas. University of Michigan.</p> <p>Complete:</p> <p>Reflective Discussion Prepare and Present Final Project Reflective Discussion</p>

c. Assignments

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

- Attendance: Attending all five class sessions, including reading all assignments and coming to class prepared.
- Discussions: Participating in reflective discussions and in a substantive and meaningful way.
- Project Deliverables: Completing all project deliverables by their due dates.
- Final Project: Participating in the final project including all required submissions.

Each assignment is graded Pass/Fail. To pass the course you must pass the final assignment and twelve of the other assignments (class sessions, discussions, deliverables).

Assignment	Due date	Percent of overall grade
5 Class Sessions	Ongoing	Pass/Fail (each)
5 Reflective Discussions	Initial Posts: Day 5 of each week Peer Responses: Day 7 of each week	Pass/Fail (each)
4 Project Deliverables	Day 1 of Week 2 Day 7 of Weeks 2-4	Pass/Fail (each)
Final Project	Final Class Session	Pass /Fail (50%)

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

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 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.
- Participating in the final project, the Policy Performance Assignment (see master assignment), including final presentation, written product, and final submission.

Please see the MSW Student Guide for more information on SSW guidelines: [Policy on Class Attendance](#).

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. You must receive at least an 80% to pass this course.

Please see the following SSW Policies related to grading:

[Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction](#)

[Student Grievance procedures](#)

[Policy for grading in special circumstances](#)

Late assignments will not be accepted.

f. Class Recording and Course Materials

Audio and video recording of in-class lectures and discussions is prohibited without the advance written permission of the instructor. Students with an approved accommodation from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities permitting the recording of class meetings must present documentation to the instructor in advance of any recording being done. The instructor reserves the right to disallow recording for a portion of any class time where privacy is a special concern. If the instructor chooses to record a class, they will decide which classes, if any, are recorded, what portion of each class is recorded, and whether a recording is made available on the course management website. On days when classes are recorded, students will be notified a recording is occurring. Class recordings and course materials may not be reproduced, sold, published, or distributed to others, in whole or in part, without the written consent of the instructor.

g. Health-Related Class Absences

Please evaluate your own health status regularly and refrain from attending class and coming to campus if you are ill. You are encouraged to seek appropriate medical attention for treatment. School of Social Work students who miss class due to illness of any kind will be given opportunities to access course materials online or provided with alternative learning opportunities. Please notify me by email about your absence as soon as practical, so that I can make accommodations. Please note that documentation (a doctor's note) for medical excuses is *not* required.

h. Policies

Academic Misconduct:

Please acquaint yourself with University of Michigan, School of Social Work, and NASW policies on scholarly integrity. All academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and misrepresentation, will be treated seriously. Note that using Web resources increases the risk of "accidental plagiarism." Do not let that happen.

Accommodations/Special Needs:

If you have a disability or impairment that requires accommodation, please contact me within two weeks of class starting to discuss what modifications are necessary. These arrangements must be specified in writing and will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities at G664 Haven Hall (734-763-3000).

Student Health and Well-being:

University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312 and <https://caps.umich.edu> during and after hours, on weekends and

holidays, or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. You may also consult University Health Service (UHS) at (734) 764-8320 and <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs>, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources.

For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit: <http://umich.edu/~mhealth/>.

Emergencies:

In the event of an emergency, dial 9-1-1 from any cell phone or campus phone.

All University of Michigan students, faculty and staff are required to familiarize themselves with emergency procedures and protocols for both inside and outside of the classroom. In the event of possible building closure (i.e. severe weather conditions, public health notices, etc.) you may contact (734)764-SSWB(7793) for up-to-date School closure information.

Be prepared. Familiarize yourself with the emergency card posted next to the phone in every classroom/meeting room. Review the information on the emergency evacuation sign (located nearest the door) and locate at least (2) emergency exits nearest the classroom. If you are concerned about your ability to exit the building in the case of an emergency, contact the Office of Student Services and/or email [ssw- ADAAcompliance@umich.edu](mailto:ssw-ADAAcompliance@umich.edu).

Office of Student Services
School of Social Work | Room 1748
734-936-0961

For more information view the annual Campus Safety Statement at <http://www.dpss.umich.edu/>. Register for UM Emergency Alerts at <http://www.dpss.umich.edu/emergency-management/alert/>.

Communications Regarding the Course

Students should feel free to email the instructor whenever questions arise. I check my email frequently and strive to reply promptly, and if I'm going to be away I will let you know in advance.

Email is the means of electronic communication at the University, so I do expect you to check your email regularly as well.

If you would like to meet via Zoom, please make an appointment, either after class or over email. I'm more than happy to meet with each one of you when you have questions, concerns, or just want to talk, and I will do my very best to be as flexible as possible with my schedule.

Classroom Policies

1. You are responsible for all information that is provided to you from the instructor in class, on Canvas, and on email.
2. Complete required readings.
3. Attend class. Attendance is expected and part of your grade.
4. Participate appropriately in class discussion and activities.
5. Facilitate your own learning. As adults, you all know how you learn best. Do what you need to do to promote this learning.
6. Be respectful of the instructor and your colleagues.
7. Use Canvas to access course materials.

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