



<b>Course title:</b>	Practicing Policy with Current Events
<b>Course #/term:</b>	SW 649, Winter 2022
<b>Time and place:</b>	Monday, 9am-12pm
<b>Credit hours:</b>	1
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	SW 508 or none if advanced standing
<b>Instructor:</b>	Kristal Reyes LMSW, MPH, CAADC
<b>Pronouns:</b>	She/her/hers
<b>Contact info:</b>	<b>email:</b> krisar@umich.edu
	You can expect a response within 72 hours
<b>Office:</b>	2764 SSWB
<b>Office hours:</b>	Monday after class or as needed, via zoom

## 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 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).

**b. Course design**

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

**c. 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. Using 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:

- 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**

<b>Date/Time</b>	<b>Agenda Practicing Policy Skills</b>	<b>Required Readings &amp; Assignments</b>
Session 1 3/7/2022 9am-12pm	Social Problem Construction: Competing Framings of Policy- Related Stories Time for group work	Media Story Canvas Reading Other Sources as assigned
Session 2 3/14/2022 9am-12pm	Finding Policy: Locating, Identifying, and Reading Policy Time for group work	Media Story Canvas Reading Other Sources as assigned
Session 3 3/21/2022 9am-12pm	Consuming Policy Stories: Deconstructing Arguments and Contextualizing Information Time for group work	Media Story Canvas Reading Other Sources as assigned
Session 4 3/28/2022 9am-12pm	Identifying Advocacy Strategies: Making your Voices Heard Time for group work	Media Story Canvas Reading Other Sources as assigned
Session 5	Synthesizing the Pieces: Policy Final Presentations	Prepare and Present Final Projects

**\*\*\* Alerts, changes, and announcements will be posted to canvas as soon as possible. \*\*\***

### **c. Assignments**

Master Assignment: Policy Performance

(Due 4/11/2022) 50 points = 50% of grade (Rubric on Canvas)

#### **Producing a News Story, Podcast, or Public Educational Announcement**

Students will work in small groups to ‘produce’ a news story, podcast, YouTube video and other research-based educational segments. 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, viewed from a social justice lens and equitable.

### **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. This is a one-credit, required, course. Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to attend all 5 classes and fully participate. Your grade will be negatively affected if you miss a class (-10 points for each missed class session). Communication with the instructor of any absence is expected (failure to communicate any absence will result in an additional -2 points). Excessive absences (more than 1) will result in an overall failing grade for the course. Students are responsible for content information from missed classes.

Participation does not mean you need to talk a lot in class. It is more about bringing a positive learning attitude to the class and being present for each session.

Each of us participates differently, and I will strive to honor that diversity among us. You will be required to engage in in-class exercises and discussions that includes engagement, providing collegial support, the use of active listening skills, initiating and participation in dialogue within group discussions. Please refer to the Policy on Class Attendance for further clarification. Instructor will deduct 5 points per class if student is not participating.

**e. Grading**

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.

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 should expect to submit assignments no later than 11:59pm on the due date to receive maximum points. It will be credit/no credit for all assignments.

***This will be a (S) Satisfactory or (U) Unsatisfactory grade. Satisfactory will be 70 points or more and Unsatisfactory will be 69 points or less.***

Grading:	Total:
Attendance and Participation (10 points/class)	50 points/50% of grade
Master Assignment	50 points/50% of grade

**f. 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 Wolverine Access. 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.

#### **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.

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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*