SOCW 510: Social Policy and Contexts of Practice (MSWI)

THIS IS A SAMPLE OUTLINE. ACTUAL COURSE OUTLINE MAY VARY IN STRUCTURE, REQUIRED READINGS, TEXTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Course description

The objective of this course is to engage in meaningful discussion and analysis of the connection between social policy and social work practice. Three objectives guide discussion and reflection:

1. To develop a critical theoretical framework to understand the link between social policy and historically specific socioeconomic and political systems, and the role of social policy in both the formation and ruling of subjects and citizens.
2. To apply this theoretical framework to a critical understanding of the impact of social policy on specific populations and on the perpetuation of interlocking colonial, nationalist, racial, patriarchal, classist, ableist, etc. social power relations.
3. To use the conceptual framework constructed in the course to explore social justice oriented alternatives.

Students are encouraged throughout the course to reflect on the intersection of social policy and their own practice contexts exploring the influences of policy on their daily practices and on the populations that become target of policy and practice.

Required Readings


Green, J. Readings available online

Electronic articles available on Course Spaces and on the Library’s database

Course Spaces:

You are expected to activate your Course Spaces account with the University’s computer department. This service is available to all students formally registered in the course. Since, this is an on-line course; Course Spaces is the place where you will find all information, resources, forums, etc. pertaining to this course. Course Spaces is also the most effective way to get in touch with your classmates and with the instructors in case of questions, requests for appointments, etc.
Instruction:

The instructors may use a diversity of on-line teaching techniques during the course. This may include weekly podcasts in the form of power-point presentations with audio or video; or skype sessions in which the instructors meets with smalls groups to discuss class content.

Please note: the content of the podcasts does not replace the readings. The instructors prepares the podcasts and lecture notes assuming that students have done the readings and are prepared to take the discussion of the readings further. As a result, the instructors builds on the readings and proposes questions for further discussion and reflection. The podcasts are also an opportunity to hear the instructors take on the material. Seeing the podcasts without having done the readings may contribute to further confusion, so it is critical that students do the readings in advance of seeing the podcasts.

Communication with the instructors: Our office hours are TBA. We generally answer emails and provide feedback on forum discussion during these times (via Course Spaces). Appointments to chat (phone or skype) with us need also to be scheduled during these office hours.

Assignments:

Assignments 1: Weekly learning exercises and forum participation 30 marks

Description: By the end of week 2 of the course, students will choose a group that will constitute the environment for all learning exercises and class discussions for the remainder of the course. Students are required to do weekly learning exercises, which are to be submitted to the each group’s “learning activity” forum under each week’s section of the Course Spaces course. Some learning activities will be graded but you will be expected to participate in the learning activities every week. The instructors or group moderators will provide directions for these learning exercises within each forum.

Weekly readings: Students are expected to take the initiative for their own learning and are required to do their readings during the week in which the corresponding learning exercise is to take place. To facilitate a fruitful and in-depth discussion and analysis of issues in the course, it is critical that students base their contribution to learning exercises and group discussion on the assigned materials in order to engage in forum discussions and do learning exercises in an informed manner. Learning exercises are designed to encourage self-reflection and critical thinking, fruitful and productive discussion, and mutual learning among class members.

Youtube or Skype alternative: Groups that prefer to conduct all their weekly forum discussion on a social media format, or through Skype are welcome to do so. You should inform the instructors of this decision and provide a date and time of your meetings. The instructors may drop-in these sessions. The role of the weekly presenters/moderators remains
the same and a report of the discussion should still be submitted to the instructors. **Please note:** If a group decides to organize their weekly discussion in a format as described above, each group member is still required to post at least one post in the group forum identifying and discussing important learning taking place in the group meeting.

**Criteria for grading:** Grading of this component of the course is based not only on the number of contributions made by students to forum discussions, but on the quality and critical analysis of responses to learning exercises, capacity to reflect on the readings, and links made between the course material and relevant policy issues in practice or personal life.

**Assignment 2: Small group moderation**

**30 Marks**

**Description:** Once groups are formed, students will sign-up to present and moderate small group discussion for any of the weeks between 5 and 9. Each student will then prepare a presentation and a group learning exercise building on the readings and instructor’s podcasts, and linking course material to policy issues in professional or personal life. The presentation should also make clear links to the theoretical frameworks discussed in weeks 2 to 4. **Keep in mind that this presentation is not meant to be a summary of the readings;** you should assume that your group mates have done the readings prior to hearing or reading your presentation. The objective of the assignment is to discuss and debate how critical theoretical frameworks such as the ones proposed at the beginning of the course can allow us to critically look at the impact of social policy on specific practice or personal settings. **There are three components to this assignment; each one has a specific timeframe:**

a) **Weekly Learning Exercise:** A clearly defined learning exercise to promote group discussion during the week you have chosen to do your presentation. Please make sure to provide clear directions and timeframes for your learning exercise. You may use the Learning Exercises provided by the instructors as examples. This learning exercise is to be submitted to the instructors by 11:59 pm on the Sunday prior to the week you have signed-up for.

b) **Presentation to the group:** You may do this by preparing a podcast (maximum 20 minutes) in the form of a voice-over power point presentation, audio file, or a video following the instructions provided in the description section of this assignment. You can also simply prepare a written document addressing the expectations of this assignment (maximum 5 pages). At the end of the presentation, you should describe the learning exercise you are asking your classmates to do during the week. This part of the assignment is due by 10 am on the Monday of the week you have signed up for. Please post your presentation directly in your group’s forum. This does not need to be submitted to the instructors in advance.

c) **Moderation and Report to the instructors:** once you have posted your presentation, you are required to moderate the group discussion during the week and then prepare a report of the week’s discussion to be submitted to the instructors by 11:59 pm on the Monday following the week you have signed up for.
This report should summarize the tone and content of the discussion taking place during the week; identify contributions, questions or opinions that influenced the discussion; and reflect on the group’s participation and learning. This report should be no longer than 3 pages.

The assignment needs to be submitted in the corresponding assignment drop box on Course Spaces.

Assignment 4: Critical Ethnography of Practice or Life  

The objective of this assignment is to use the material studied in the course to reflect on particular practice or personal settings in which students are involved or wish to be involved and in which social policy plays a role. This is an academic paper and as such must meet all academic conventions; however, it is also expected that in this assignment students reflect on how the course material allows them to link the critical frameworks discussed in the course to specific professional practices and/or personal experiences. Thus, students should think of this assignment as an auto-ethnography in which they trace the way in which social policy intersects, influences and determines their practice or life. For example, students can reflect on a specific social policy and its role in structuring, determining and influencing what they do in their practice:

- How do those policies imagine or produce the subject of policy?
- How do they govern or rule both workers and service users?
- How do they facilitate or prevent social justice work?
- What kind of changes should be introduced to policy to facilitate just or transformative practices?

Since most practice settings are influenced by more than one social policy, an exercise that could be useful in identifying the central focus of the paper is to think about a particular aspect of practice and then trace the kinds of organizational and state policy that determines or influences that practice. Once you have identified the policies at work, you can then choose one or two of these policies for your analysis. Alternatively, students can reflect on a social policy that impacts on specific conditions of their life (for example, employment policy, student financial assistance policy, or education policy) and conduct a similar analysis than the one described above. Keep in mind that students are expected to conduct a certain amount of specific research for this paper, specifically related to the social policies that will be discussed.

The paper should not exceed 15 pages and must be formatted as an academic paper and include proper citations and bibliography. Assignments will be graded first and foremost on their capacity to engage with the course readings and apply the course material to a specific policy, practice or personal setting. The assignment is to be submitted in the assignment drop box on Course Spaces.
**Important note about the final assignment:**
In order to pass this course, students must obtain at least a passing grade (B+) in the final assignment regardless of the accumulated grade of other course work.

**Policy on late assignments:**
Please note that generally no extensions are given on any of the assignments in the course unless proper doctor’s note is provided or the student has accommodations related to special learning needs. Late assignments are subjected to late penalties as per university policy.

**Request for Accommodation:** Please note that if you need assistance in order to fully participate and complete the assignments due to disability, you need to discuss this with me at the outset of the course. The School of Social Work's Policy for People with Disabilities can be viewed at the following link: [http://socialwork.uvic.ca/policies/pwdis.htm](http://socialwork.uvic.ca/policies/pwdis.htm)

**Policies:** Please access the following links for policies on accommodation, assessment of student learning, submitting assignments, attendance and participation, course challenge, course evaluation, and grading: [http://socialwork.uvic.ca/policies](http://socialwork.uvic.ca/policies)

**Plagiarism and academic integrity:** Plagiarism involves using other people’s work without due acknowledgement, irrespective of the site where the author’s work is published. Plagiarism may be done deliberately or unwittingly. Either way, it constitutes a serious act of academic misconduct and will result in failure in the course – NO EXCEPTIONS. Students at this level of study should understand this very well. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism and how you might prevent it from occurring, consult the university website: [http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2005/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcI.html](http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2005/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcI.html)

**Class Schedule**

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<th>Week 1:</th>
<th>Course introduction</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Introductions and familiarization with course page.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
<td>No reading required</td>
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### Week 2: A theoretical framework to understand social policy

**Readings:**


### Week 3: Neoliberalism and social policy: Political and economic contexts

**Readings:**


### Week 4: Social policy and the production and government of the self

**Readings:**

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<th>Week 5:</th>
<th><strong>Racialized communities and the reproduction of whiteness in social policy</strong></th>
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<th>Week 6:</th>
<th><strong>Resurgence of traditionalist within governmentality</strong></th>
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<th>Week 7:</th>
<th><strong>Resistance, Regeneration, Re-claim</strong></th>
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Week 8: Caring for Indigenous Children, Families and Communities

**Readings:**

(Optional Reading)

2. Maintaining Identities : The Soul Work of Adoption and Aboriginal Children

3. Promising Practice

Week 9: Indigenous health and well being in research and policy

**Readings:**


Week 10: Reading Break – No class

Week 11: Looking for critical alternatives Part I

**Readings:**
1. “Better Red than Dead: Toward a Nation-Peoples and a Peoples Nation” in Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political

**Week 12: Re-visioning Policy and Practice**

- What does Policy analysis mean for you?
- How does your analysis of policy inform your practice?
- How does your analysis of policy affect your working relationship with children & families?
- What are ways you have learned to resist dominant forms of policy in this course or in your place of employment?