

**POLS 3319 Politics of Social Policy**  
**Section: 01-13999**

T/Th 10:00–11:30 AM, M106  
University of Houston  
Department of Political Science

Spring 2015

**Professor**

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**Course Description**

This course is intended to introduce students to the major social welfare policies in the United States, and to help students understand major political debates in social policy. This course is suitable for both political science majors and students who are interested in the politics of social policy. Students who are interested in this course need to finish the prerequisites, POLS 1336 and 1337, or equivalent, or consent of instructor. The purpose of this course is to provide interested students a foundation for understanding the history, trends, current problems and prospects of the American welfare state.

The term “social policy” is broadly defined as policies and programs that are developed to address citizens’ social needs. In the United States, neither the market nor the government monopolizes the process of producing and delivering social welfare policies. The design of the American welfare state, moreover, is heavily influenced by federalism in that welfare responsibilities are vertically distributed across all levels of governments. To understand the complexity of the American welfare system, emphasis is given on the the role of government and the market pertaining to producing and delivering social welfare policies. Through the semester, we will examine three major types of social policies: *public assistance*, *social insurance*, *social services*. We will divide class topics into two parts: lecture and policy analysis lab. The lecture sessions are intended to

introduce students the basic concepts and background about a specific social policy program. The policy analysis lab is designed to teach students how to use scientific methods to analyze and evaluate a social policy issue.

### **Learning Objectives**

1. To become familiar with the history and politics of social welfare policies in the United States.
2. To become familiar with the different designs of social welfare policies in the United States.
3. To learn the scientific methods of analyzing social policy issues.

### **Required Textbook**

- DiNitto, Diana M. and David H. Johnson. 2012. *Essentials of Social Welfare: Politics and Public Policy*. Pearson Education Inc.
- Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Theta Skocpol. 2012. *Health Care Reform and American Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know, Revised and Updated Edition*, Oxford University Press.
- Additional required readings are listed under weekly topics.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Class attendance and regular participation in class discussion.
2. Read the assignments and carefully prepare for each class. Treat this course as a job assignment in your future career with the understanding that while your job performance determines your pay in the workplace, your classroom performance determines your grade in the course.
3. Two Policy Analysis Reports. The two policy analysis reports are structured data-analysis assignments, which are open-book take-home assignments and designed to help students gain analytical skills. Students are required to use analytical skills learned in the policy analysis lab to complete two 5-7 page policy analysis reports. Assignment instructions will be distributed prior to the deadlines. You are expected to finish both assignments independently. Please contact me if you have any clarification question. All the clarification questions will be shared with the entire class via Blackboard Learn discussion board.
4. Two Written Exams. There will be two exams as scheduled in the subsequent Course Calendar section. Both will be close-book exams and administrated in class. Both exams are based on lectures and the required readings.

### **Attendance, Exam and Late Policy**

1. Attendance. Attendance is required. Absence from the class will only be accepted in extenuating circumstances with a university-accepted excuse. If you know in prior that you cannot attend the class, please inform me before the scheduled class-meeting. If there is an emergency, because of which you need to leave early, you should avoid disturbing the lecture.

2. Valid E-Mail Address. The University of Houston considers your e-mail address in PeopleSoft the official method of contact between you and the University. As a prerequisite of this course, you must have a valid e-mail address in PeopleSoft. You may not claim an incorrect or blank e-mail address as an excuse in the case of missed communications from the instructor or TA.
3. Blackboard Learn. This course will use Blackboard Learn to distribute lecture notes, additional required readings, and grades.
4. Late Policy. Late work will be penalized by one letter grade per day. E.g. an A-paper turned in one day late will become a B-paper. Late work would only be accepted without penalty if students had university-accepted excuses.
5. Exam Policy. Students are required to take and turn in exams at the scheduled time. During the exam period, students ARE NOT allowed to discuss exam questions with others. Exam grades will be posted in the Blackboard Learn. Please DO NOT use email to discuss your grades with me. If you have any question related to your grades, you should come to see me during my office hours or schedule an office appointment with me.
6. Make-up Exams. If you know that you will miss a test due to legitimate reasons, notify me before the exam, I will schedule a makeup examination. If you fail to notify me your absence before the exam, it is my discretion whether to give an early makeup exam. If you miss an exam for another reason or no reason at all, all makeup exams for those missed tests will be given on May 7. All makeup exams will be different from Exam 1 and Exam 2.

## Grading

1. Attendance, 10%
2. Two policy analysis reports, 20% each.
3. Exam 1, 20%.
4. Exam 2, 30%.
5. Final Grades
  - A = 100-93 (Excellent)
  - A- = 92-90
  - B+ = 89-86
  - B = 85-83
  - B- = 82-80 (Good)
  - C+ = 79-76
  - C = 75-73
  - C- = 72-70 (Average)
  - D+ = 69-66
  - D = 65-63
  - D- = 62-60 (Poor passing)
  - F = 59-0 (Failing)

## Academic Integrity

As commonly defined, presenting the words or works of others' as your own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues, without

which research cannot be safely communicated. Plagiarism is also a violation of the UH Academic Honesty Policy. If you are uncertain of what constitute academic dishonesty, you should contact me prior to submitting the assignment and/or check the UH Academic Honesty Policy from the university website: [www.uh.edu/provost/policies/uhhonestypolicy.html](http://www.uh.edu/provost/policies/uhhonestypolicy.html). Students are expected to adhere to the UH Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating or plagiarism in course assignments, exams, and the final paper will lead to a grade of F.

### **Americans with Disability Act (ADA)**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you need special accommodations and assistance due to a disability, please contact the Center for Students with DisABILITIES (CSD Building 568, Room 110) and the Learning Support Services (LSS, 321 Social Work Building), or call 713-743-5411 to make appropriate arrangements.

### **Course Calendar**

#### *Week 1: Introduction*

1. January 20: Course overview, no required readings.
2. January 22: Social policy and the policymaking process.
  - DiNitto & Johnson: Introduction, Ch.1.

#### *Week 2: The Politics and History of Social Welfare Policy*

1. January 27: The American social welfare system.
  - DiNitto & Johnson, Ch. 3.
2. January 29: Understanding government welfare spending.
  - Policy Lab 1: The United States 2012 census of governments.

#### *Week 3: Poverty and Social Insurance*

1. February 3: Poverty trends in the United States.
  - DiNitto & Johnson, Ch.4.
2. February 5: Preventing poverty: Social insurance.
  - DiNitto & Johnson, Ch.5.

#### *Week 4: Economic Inequality*

1. February 10: Income inequality and welfare.
  - DiNitto & Johnson, Ch.7.

- DeNavas-Walt, Carmen et al. 2013. “Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance: Coverage in the United States.” *U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration, United States Census Bureau, Current Population Reports*, pp.1-22.
2. February 12: Welfare change in the American states.
    - Policy Lab 2: Measuring income and welfare generosity.
    - DeNavas-Walt, Carmen et al. 2013, Appendix A.
    - Smeeding, Timothy M. 2005. “Public Policy, Economic Inequality and Poverty: The United States in Comparative Perspective.” *Social Science Quarterly*, 86(s1):955-983.

*Week 5: Healthcare Policy Background*

1. February 17: The American healthcare system.
  - Patel, Kant and Mark Rushefsky. 2008. *Health Care in America: Separate and Unequal*, Ch. 1.
  - Distribute policy analysis Assignment 1.
2. February 19: The issue of uninsured.
  - DiNitto & Johnson, Ch. 8.

*Week 6: Healthcare Reform*

1. February 24: The Obama healthcare reform.
  - Jacobs and Skocpol 2012, entire book.
2. February 26: National reform and state reactions.
  - Policy Lab 3: Comparing state reactions to the PPACA (2010).

*Week 7: Mid-Term Exam*

1. March 3: Review for Mid-Term Exam.
2. March 5: Mid-Term Exam (in class).

*Week 8: Protecting the Vulnerable*

1. March 10: Social services for children.
  - DiNitto & Johnson, Ch.10, 220-232.
  - Discuss Mid-Term Exam.
2. March 12: Social service for the elderly, disabled, and mental disorders.
  - DiNitto & Johnson, Ch.6 and Ch.10, 232-247.
  - Policy analysis Assignment 1 due *by NOON* on Blackboard Learn.

*Week 9 (March 16-20): Spring break.*

*Week 10: Gender Diversity and Social Welfare*

1. March 24: Women, family care, and reproductive rights.

- DiNitto & Johnson, Ch. 11.
  - McFarlane, Deborah R. and Kenneth J. Meier. *The Politics of Fertility Control*, Ch.3, 5, and 7.
  - Discuss policy analysis Assignment 1.
2. March 26: Social equality in welfare provision (I).
    - Policy Lab 4: Analyzing gender (in)equality in welfare participation.
    - Distribute policy analysis Assignment 2.

*Week 11: Racial/Ethnic Diversity and Social Welfare*

1. March 31: Racial diversity and welfare generosity.
  - DiNitto & Johnson, Ch. 12, 275-293.
2. April 2: Social equality in welfare provision (II).
  - Policy Lab 5: Understanding racial in(equality) in welfare participation.

*Week 12: Immigration and Welfare Inclusion*

1. April 7: Immigration and welfare reform.
  - DiNitto & Johnson, Ch.12. 294-302.
  - Card, David and Steven Raphael. 2013. *Immigration, Poverty, and Socioeconomic Inequality*, Ch.11-12.
2. April 9: The chilling effect of welfare reform.
  - Tara, Waston, “Inside the Refrigerator: Immigration Enforcement and Chilling in Immigrant Medicaid Participation.” *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, forthcoming. (Earlier draft: National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 16278).

*Week 13: Immigration and Welfare Inclusion (cont.)*

1. April 14: Immigration enforcement as a race-making institution.
  - Card, David and Steven Rapheal. 2013. *Immigration, Poverty, and Socioeconomic Inequality*, Ch.10.
  - Policy Lab 6: Immigrants’ access to safety net.
2. April 16: Work on policy analysis Assignment 2, no in-class meeting.
  - Policy analysis Assignment 2 due *by NOON* on Blackboard Learn.

*Week 14: Public Opinion on Welfare Policy*

1. April 21: Public Opinion and Public Policy.
  - Gilens, Martin. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*, Ch.1-2.
  - Post review questions for Exam 2 on Blackboard Learn.
2. April 23: Individualism, Racial Attitudes and Opposition to Welfare.

- Gilens, Martin. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*, Ch. 3.
- Policy Lab 7: Race and public opinion on social welfare provision: The General Social Survey 2012.

*Week 15: Wrap Up*

1. April 28: Conclusion: Politics and the Future of Social Welfare Policy.
  - DiNitto & Johnson, Conclusion.
  - Discuss policy analysis Assignment 2.
2. April 30: Review for Final Exam.

*Week 16: Final Exam*

- May 5: Final Exam (in class).
- May 7: Scheduled make-up exam. Location: PGH Room 426, Time: TBA .

*Week 17*

- Revised policy analysis Assignment 1& 2 due by May 12, Noon, on Blackboard Learn.

**Caveat**

The aforementioned weekly schedule and assignments in this course may be subject to change.