PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

This course is designed to provide students with knowledge, values and skills to engage in macro level advanced policy practice in organizations and communities in order to promote social and economic justice. This course focuses on policy issues relevant to rural and small communities and diverse populations residing in rural and small communities. Global issues and policy advocacy is also examined. Students research and conduct a policy analysis of an issue of significance to rural and small community advanced generalist social work practice. In order to develop competencies for becoming an effective policy advocate, students learn, analyze, design and implement strategies for promoting policy change within an organization, community, or public policy making body. Students learn how research, in particular collecting data to support effective, evidence-based practice, can be utilized to influence policy makers and enact policies that promote social and economic justice. Finally, students examine the values and ethical issues related to policy practice.

PLACE IN THE MSW CURRICULUM

SOWK 655 Social Welfare Policy Practice is a required course taken during the second semester of the concentration year in the MSW program. The course builds upon the knowledge and skills learned in SOWK 605 Social Welfare Policy and Services and SOWK 611 Foundations of Generalist Practice II which focuses on mezzo practice in task groups and macro practice in organizations and communities. Values, ethics, and diversity content from SOWK 607 Professional Competence Seminar I and SOWK 657 Professional Competence Seminar II are applied to policy practice.

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

The Social Welfare Issues and Policy Practice course contributes to the University Mission related to promoting learning through effective teaching and scholarship. The course is also supportive of the College Mission to promote exploration, understanding, explanation and transformation of the social world through graduate teaching and learning.

MSW PROGRAM GOALS

This course supports the achievement of the MSW Program goals, specifically: 1) to prepare competent and effective graduates to be advanced generalist social work practitioners with groups, organizations and communities, 2) to prepare graduates who apply and promote at an advanced level the values, ethics, theory, and perspectives of the social work profession, 3) to prepare graduates who promote at an advanced level social and economic justice in a diverse society within a global context, and 4) to promote community involvement of graduates within the local, region, state and global communities.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

1) Analyze the contemporary policy issues impacting rural and small communities and the degree to which social and economic justice is achieved (MSW 1.8C, 3.2, 3.3C).

2) Examine the contemporary policy issues impacting diverse groups, including diversity of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental disability, age and national origin (MSW 1.4, 1.8C, 2.1, 3.1).

3) Research and conduct a policy analysis of an issue of significance to rural and small community advanced generalist social work practice (MSW 1.8C, 3.2, 3.3C).

4) Understand and demonstrate utilization of strategies and tactics to effectively influence agency and governmental social welfare policy and programs in order to promote social and economic justice (MSW 1.5, 1.6, 1.8C, 1.10C, 3.4C, 4.2).

5) Critically examine ethical issues in policy practice with an emphasis on issues pertaining to rural and small community advanced generalist social work practice (MSW 2.4C).

6) Critically examine political social work and opportunities for social workers to engage in and influence the political process (MSW 2.4C, 3.4C).

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS


In addition students will use select readings from the following textbooks required in SOWK 605 Social Welfare Policy and Services:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Social Welfare Policy Analysis Paper (Designated Learning Assignment L.O. 3.3C)
Students will research and write a policy analysis paper on an issue of significant to advanced generalist rural and small community social work practice using the Karger and Stoesz policy
analysis framework provided in class. The analysis may be of an agency policy, state policy, or federal policy. The analysis will include an examination of the degree to which the policy promotes the values of the social work profession, including social and economic justice and dignity and worth of the person.

**Policy Proposal**
Using the policy selected in the policy analysis paper, students will draft a policy proposal advocating changes for changes in the current policy or ways in which the current policy is implemented. Students must interview a minimum of 3 key informants (with at least one being a social worker implementing the policy or advocating for change) for information or feedback regarding this proposal.

**Advocacy Project (Designated Learning Assignment L.O. 3.4C)**
Students will assume the role of a change agent and begin to put the policy proposal in action. Students will develop and implement a social action plan utilizing an array of advocacy strategies and tactics, including but not limited to lobbying a government official, attending a meeting or public hearing, writing a letter to the editor, working on a task force, participating in a public rally, etc.

**On-Line Discussion of Critical Policy Issues Impacting Rural Social Work Practice**
Students will respond to discussion questions posed by the instructor based upon the readings examining critical policy issues impacting rural and small community social work practice within a diverse society. Issues of diversity examined may include age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.

**EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING**

A total of 100 points can be earned in this course. Points will be accumulated through the: 1) Policy Analysis Paper (30%), 2) Policy Proposal (30%), 3) Advocacy Project and presentation (30%), and 4) On-Line Discussion of Critical Policy Issues (10%).

Students will be evaluated in accordance with the following system of letter grades: A, B, C, D, and F.

- A – 90% to 100% of possible points represents work of definitely superior quality
- B – 80% to 89% of possible points represents a level of performance that is above average
- C – 70% to 79% of possible points represents a below-average performance
- D – 60% to 69% of possible points represents unacceptable performance
- F – 59% or below represents unacceptable performance

A grade of “incomplete” will only be awarded under rare circumstances. Students must meet with the instructor to request an “incomplete” by the 14th week of the semester. The request must include a plan with a timeline for completing and having evaluated all coursework prior to the first day of the subsequent semester.

**COURSE, DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

Minnesota State University, Mankato, SOWK 655, 2009-2010
NOTE: For complete policies please refer to the MSW Program Graduate Student Handbook as well as the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, College of Graduate Studies and Research, and Minnesota State University, Mankato policy documents for Graduate Students.

STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The University and Department of Social Work is committed to providing equal education and employment opportunities to all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, veteran’s status. National origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, physical and mental disabilities, creed, status due to receipt of public assistance, or any other groups against which discrimination is prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Minnesota Statute Chapter 363, and other applicable state or federal laws or State University System policy. Complaints of discrimination are filed with the Office of Affirmative Action located at 112 Armstrong Hall.

ACCESS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

In accordance with University Policy, the Department of Social Work is committed to ensuring equal educational opportunity and full participation for qualified persons with disabilities as is legally required under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 including section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. All students with a disability may request accommodation through the Office of Disability Services. Visit the Office of Disabilities Services at 132 Memorial Library or call 507-389-2825 (V/TTY). Student disability accommodations will be made by faculty based upon the advisement of the Office of Disability Services.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES POLICY AND ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Students are expected to comply with the Student Responsibility Policy and Academic Honesty Policy stipulated in the MSW Program Graduate Student Handbook.

APA STYLE WRITING POLICY

Students are expected to comply with the stylistic guidelines of the American Psychological Association, sixth edition. The APA manual is available at the MSU Memorial Library (reference section, ready reference section, reserve collection, general collection and reference desk): call number BF76.7 .P83 2010. The reference for the APA manual is:


An on-line sources to help with using APA is located at: http://www.apastyle.org/

Minnesota State University, Mankato, SOWK 655, 2009-2010
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1
Topic: Introduction to the course: Social Worker as Policy Advocate
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Jansson, Chapter 1: Joining a Tradition of Social Reform

Week 2
Topic: Ethical Issues in Policy Practice; Theories of social justice
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Jansson, Chapter 2: Articulating Four Rationales for Participating in Policy Advocacy
Optional reading:

Week 3
Topic: Review of Policy Analysis Framework
Topic: The Policy Advocate Context
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Jansson, Chapter 3: Obtaining skills and Competencies for Policy Advocacy
Chapter 4: Understanding the Ecology of Policy in Governmental, Electoral, Community and Agency Settings
Chapter 14: Troubleshooting and Assessing Implemented Policies

Week 4
Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Welfare Reform and Rural Poverty
Delivery Method: On-line
Required Readings
Weber, Duncan & Whitener, Introduction: As the Dust Settles – Welfare Reform and Rural America

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Part One: Welfare Reform, Rural Labor Markers, and Rural Poverty
Part Three: Employment and Family-Well Being under Welfare Reform

Optional reading:

Week 5
Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Food Policy
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Karger & Stoesz, Chapter 17: The Politics of Food Policy and Rural Life
Weber, Duncan & Whitener, Part 4: Food Assistance and Hunger – Rural Dimension

Week 6
Topic: Preparation for Creating a Policy Proposal
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Jansson, Chapter 6: Committing to an Issue – Building Agendas
Chapter 7: Analyzing Problems in the First Step of Policy Analysis

Additional readings to be assigned

Week 7
Topic: Developing Policy Proposals, Part One
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings
Jansson, Chapter 8: Developing Policy Proposals in the Second, Third, and Fourth Steps of Policy Analysis
Chapter 9: Presenting and Defending Policy Proposals

Optional reading:

Week 8
Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Homelessness in Rural America
Delivery Method: **On-line**
Required Readings
Rollinson & Pardeek, Homelessness in Rural America: Policy and Practice
Optional reading:
Week 9
Topic: Developing Policy Proposals, Part Two
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Readings


Week 10
Topic: Rural Policy Issue – Aging in Rural America
Delivery Method: On-Line
Required Readings


Week 11
Topic: Strategies for Policy Change, Part One
Delivery Method: In-class
Required Reading

Jansson, Chapter 11: Developing Political Strategy
Jansson, Chapter 12: Putting Political Strategy into Action
Jansson, Chapter 13: Engaging in Ballot-Based Policy Advocacy

Week 12
Topic: Strategies for Policy Change, Part Two
Delivery Method: In-Class
Required Reading


Optional readings:


**Week 13**

Topic: Global Issues and Policy Advocacy  
Delivery: On-Line  
Required Readings  
Jansson, Chapter 5: Expanding Policy Advocacy across National Boarders  
Karger & Stoesz, Chapter 18: The American Welfare State in International Perspective

**Week 14**

Topic: Report on Student Outcome of Advocacy Project – Student presentations of policy analysis, policy proposals, and advocacy project  
Delivery: In-class  
Required Readings: None

**Week 15 – Finals**

**SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Minnesota State University, Mankato, SOWK 655, 2009-2010